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WINTER, 1956-1957

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# RELIGION IN LIFE

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

*A Christian Quarterly*

OF OPINION AND DISCUSSION

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VOLUME XXVI

1956-1957

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WE ARE HAPPY to announce that RELIGION IN LIFE is now available in microfilm form for the benefit of libraries that may desire it. A pressing problem facing libraries is that of providing adequate space for a growing number of publications. The publishers of RELIGION IN LIFE are cooperating with University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, to make available to such libraries microfilm rolls each of which contains a year's issues of the magazine. Our Volume XXV (1955-56) is now obtainable in this form, at a cost of \$1.90.

Sales are restricted to those subscribing to the paper edition, and the microfilm roll is only distributed to purchasers at the end of the volume year (i.e., in the Fall). The microfilm copy is a positive, furnished on labeled plastic reels. Under this plan the library may scrap the paper copies after a few years and substitute the microfilm roll. Orders should be addressed to University Microfilms, 313 N. First Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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# RELIGION IN LIFE

A CHRISTIAN QUARTERLY of opinion and discussion

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## Anniversary Announcement

THE present issue of *RELIGION IN LIFE* marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of this Journal by an interdenominational Editorial Board headed by John W. Langdale, then Editor of the Abingdon Press. In 1940 Dr. Langdale was replaced by Nolan B. Harmon, who served as Editor until his election to the Methodist episcopacy in July, 1956. Shortly before the press date of this issue of Winter 1956-1957, Emory Stevens Bucke was elected Book Editor of The Methodist Church and of Abingdon Press. Dr. Bucke thus automatically becomes the third Editor of *RELIGION IN LIFE*.

Emory Stevens Bucke, after experience in several pastorates in Massachusetts, was for nine years Editor of the independent Methodist publication, *Zions Herald*, and was also instructor in religious journalism at Boston University. During the last two years he has been manager of the College Text Book Department of Abingdon Press in Nashville, and included in his duties the promotion of *RELIGION IN LIFE*. He thus comes to us with a most appropriate journalistic background and an already keen interest in this Quarterly. Grateful for the stimulating association we have had with Dr. Harmon in recent years, we look forward to a similar happy relationship with Dr. Bucke.

The eminent and beloved "charter member" of our Editorial group, Dr. John Baillie, Principal of New College, Edinburgh, writes us as follows. "I well remember the day, twenty-five years ago, when Dr. Langdale called a number of us together to discuss the founding of a new Journal which, while broadly interdenominational in character, would present current theological issues in such a way as to reach a wide audience without abating anything of genuine scholarship. I remember also the lengthy discussion that preceded our unanimous adoption of the present title. I believe the title has proved to be a good one, and I believe also that the standard we had in mind for the contributions has been well maintained—perhaps even surpassing our expectations. Certainly I have myself read each succeeding issue, as it has reached me in Scotland, with the greatest interest and profit."

In these days of grave decisions on the world scene, we look forward with hope to years of further growth and influence in creative Christian thought and action, as *RELIGION IN LIFE* moves on into its second quarter-century.

—THE EDITORIAL BOARD

# Our Present Situation in Biblical Theology

JAMES R. BRANTON

## I

**B**IBLICAL STUDY HAS UNDERGONE some far-sweeping changes in the last few years and is now showing definite signs of another drastic turn. Before we look hopefully or anxiously at the cloud of change on the horizon, somewhat larger than a man's hand, we ought to look at our heritage as biblical students, especially that heritage which extends from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, and to recall that it comes from both conservative and liberal schools of thought.

In this exciting period of growing biblical scholarship, one of the great contributions was in the field of *lower criticism*, the study of text. During this period the very able school of textual study blossomed and bore, as it still bears, fruit which cannot be regarded with anything other than grateful admiration. Through this work of scholarship we have a better, more reliable text of the Bible and can speak with a high degree of assurance on the reliability of our text. Furthermore, *historical* studies were so carefully developed that today we are forced to recognize our indebtedness to our past every time we consider matters of date, authorship, *Sitz im Leben*, and other areas of common knowledge regarding the books of the Bible. Many other technical studies have contributed extensively to our better understanding of the Bible. Just to recall a few, we might mention our knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels and their interrelationship, including their sources, the social setting of the biblical writings, the world of the early church, the religious ideas of the non-Christian world into which the church moved, the free adaptation of ideas by the early church as it adjusted itself comfortably or uncomfortably to its world.

All these have become common knowledge of scientific biblical study, including the work of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. Biblical scholars,

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especially of the liberal school, took pride in the fact that all areas of biblical study were subjected to the same careful study as other areas of history, cultures and religions. They moved from these tools of objective criticism into the areas of interpretation, greatly influenced, it must be said, by the currently popular ideas prevailing in Psychology, Philosophy, and Sociology. It was inevitable that biblical interpretation should at many points be strictly contemporary, culturally conditioned, with a preponderance of social and ethical emphasis and with a less weighty emphasis upon theology.

During this era men like Harnack, Bacon, *et al.*, who came at the end of the cycle, represented the great attitudes characteristic of that school of thought throughout its history. They were able members of the technical schools and outspoken interpreters of biblical ideas seen through critical methods of historical research. Much of the New Testament first-century framework was frankly discarded and its message rationally reinterpreted to fit into the intellectual world view of the contemporary period. The Christian faith was courageously modernized to speak the language and think the thoughts of a progressive era, so that much of its mythological cosmology and metaphysics had to be discarded.

The whole process could be illustrated by the interpretation of Jesus. As this school saw him, he was an ethically minded social prophet-reformer whose message challenged the modern man to a nobler life. His message was set free from theological encumbrances and ancient naïveté. His miracles were either by-passed or rationalized, and the kingdom of God interpreted as a social utopia toward which man was to move in his upward march. This was a tremendously moving ideal, and it captivated the minds and hearts of large numbers of all classes—especially the educated and thoughtful. For Jesus and his cause were interpreted as the contemporary, easily comprehensible and inevitable purpose of God for man and his world. All that was not easily modernized, such as eschatology, was set aside as the work of the uncomprehending followers of Jesus and not that of Jesus himself.

## II

However, as early as Schweitzer's *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* it began to be clear that a great deal of biblical study had failed to do justice to the historical facts about Jesus. He had been presented as an ethically minded man of the present era. However, Schweitzer's study revealed that he was a child of his day, not ours. He was at home there, but definitely not at home in our sophisticated world where world-view had changed and

outlook for the future was no longer related to a catastrophic *eschaton*. For he was a thoroughgoing eschatologist, and the New Testament eschatology was definitely his faith. With Schweitzer's volume, biblical study began to take a turn into new directions. It became clear that the *Weltanschauung* of the New Testament writers was not our own in many areas: in cosmology, in psychology, in biology; furthermore, its eschatological hope was quite alien from our ways of thought, yet deeply imbedded in the New Testament. So vitally was eschatology related to the message of the New Testament as to be essential to any honest historical interpretation. But any conclusions consistent with this *Weltanschauung* were unacceptable to the modern mind.

This was the cue for an entirely new direction in biblical study. The new biblical approach moved onto the stage, and accused the older of posing as objective, but of actually being so culturally bound as to involve more *eisegesis* than *exegesis*. For had not the older school already rejected theology before it ever asked what the New Testament taught? Had it not already accepted ethical and social ideals from the cultural milieu before finding them in the Bible? Moreover, the older approach had turned to science and philosophy for authority, and used the Bible merely as support for the great voice of Reason. It had a theory about man based upon the idea of evolution and progress, which it then proceeded to discover in the Bible. The general growth of religion itself was in this stream, especially in the Old Testament, where the older school found that the idea of God began with primitive conceptions of deity and religion and gradually progressed in understanding till it reached a climax in the spiritual insights of Jesus of Nazareth.

Moreover, the new biblical interpreters challenged the older portrait of Jesus, challenging the interpretation as too much of a modern fabrication and not the result of true biblical study, and further claiming all the best methods of biblical criticism (especially historical and form criticism) to demonstrate that Jesus cannot possibly be known; that all we have is affirmations by men of the faith; that ours is simply a community portrait. Hence, it is impossible to talk about the Jesus of history; all that we have is the Christ of faith. The analytical study of the Bible had produced a post-mortem attitude toward the religious message, so that the wide sweep of God's purpose in the world had been killed. In the same way the detailed study of each book produced an atomized view of the Bible so that one felt only the fragmentation and not the unity of it. All of this resulted in a strict

scientific, historical study that missed the spiritual, the true meaning of Scripture.

These were charges which placed the spotlight, either fairly or unfairly, upon the weaknesses of the then popular interpretations by biblical scholars. As a result a new approach, with a very loud "Return to the Bible," gained the ascendancy. And now for some years this approach has occupied the center of the stage.

One of the early and most influential of the biblical studies based on this approach to the Bible is Karl Barth's Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans. All "natural theology" and kindred approaches which find revelation of God in man's religious or philosophical quests were cut away; the Bible contains truth which is *the* truth, and stands by itself. This truth is the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The task of the theologian is to expound the Bible correctly—meaning that one must see it all from Jesus Christ as the Center. This applies to the Old Testament as well as the New. His approach could be summarized in a statement from *The Doctrine of the Word of God*:<sup>1</sup> "The Bible constitutes itself the Canon. It is the Canon because it has imposed itself as such upon the Church and invariably does so. The Bible is the Canon just because it *is so*. But it is so because it imposes itself as such." While in his earlier works Barth makes an obvious appeal to Kant and other philosophers, in his later work the Bible is its own and sole authority; and it is Christian theology with the Trinity at the center which he enunciates.

While Brunner would take issue with Barth at many points, he nevertheless shares his repudiation of reason as capable of finding God. He treats the Bible as authority, but not as absolute, only relative—authoritative insofar as it conveys Christ to us. One could mention large numbers of biblical theologians and scholars who support this sort of approach, but this is enough to suggest that a drastic change took place. The Bible is no longer in the supporting cast, paying homage to the conclusions which owe their *raison d'être* to philosophy, sociology, or psychology, where reason was the tool and scientific method was the technique. With a sweeping gesture the whole reign of human reason and the scientific method of studying the Christian faith were relegated to the theological Valhalla, and a new era came so rapidly that there were not many protests from the standpoint of older biblical scholarship.

With this rapid change the new theological approach has placed the

<sup>1</sup> *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. I, Part I. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936, pp. 120-121.



Bible back in the center of our thought. Moreover, it has reminded us again that the Bible is not mere fact. It has meaning, and the meaning must not be eclipsed by the fact. Also, it has reminded us that the historical studies in connection with the Bible are far more than secular research. It has re-emphasized the doctrine of sin and forced a new interpretation of the nature of man. G. Ernest Wright in *The Biblical Doctrine of Man in Society*,<sup>2</sup> and C. H. Dodd and others in *Man in God's Design according to the New Testament*,<sup>3</sup> illustrate this trend. There is a new appreciation of the biblical account of the fall of man, the need of man as seen in the Bible, especially in Romans, and of the atonement. The nature of man has called for more thought on the Bible concept of redemption and grace. These in turn have projected the idea of the church and its ministry as presented in the Bible. This has forced a new approach to history and its meaning and God's relationship to it, including a fresh consideration of eschatology.

So with the challenge of liberalism's chief doctrines came a new appreciation of the Bible as the word of God. For several years now the Old Testament and the New Testament scholars have fallen into step with this school of thought. The unity of the Bible as the answer to the older fragmentation process became popular, and many books have expounded the thesis. The creation, the fall, the call of Abraham, the Covenant, the death and resurrection of Christ, the Church, the *kerygma*, the *eschaton*, have become for large numbers the essential kernel of the Bible. "*Heilsgeschichte*," as over against sociological-cultural process theories, has returned to the scene of biblical study and has become a widely used term referring to the biblical account of God's purpose in history—his salvation event. This began with the Old Testament and blossomed in the New. "The event" or "the Christ event" is another term of great popularity, including the whole purpose of God as realized in Christ—not simply the life of Jesus, but all that presaged it and all that God does through it and after it. This replaces the older so-called "Jesus cult." "The eyes of faith" has become a widely accepted term also, affirming that the truth and meaning of the Christian *kerygma* can only be perceived by those who stand within the fold of the Faith.

Hence there is no appeal to the objectivity of the historian, nor to the rationally convincing logic of investigation by the scientific method. The New Testament is the book of faith, springing out of the faith and speaking

<sup>2</sup> *Ecumenical Biblical Studies No. 2*. Student Christian Movement Press, 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, 1953.

authoritatively to those within the faith. It follows that much of the earlier biblical study ceased to appeal to those of this school of thought. The Synoptic Gospels were no longer the center of the Bible, they were not as valuable as Paul or the Fourth Gospel. This was a reaction to a long-standing preference for the Synoptic Gospels. The prophets in the Old Testament have ceased to be treated as men concerned primarily with social and personal issues, and are used chiefly as the probers of the deeper consciousness of man's hopeless and helpless state. Even the Sermon on the Mount has been interpreted as portraying the high and holy demands of God which man in his helpless state cannot begin to approximate. It is also occasionally used as included in that which Paul rightly repudiates as "law." Bultmann in his *Theology of the New Testament*<sup>4</sup> gives about thirty pages to the interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels and about one thousand to the works of Paul, the Fourth Gospel, and other New Testament works. This has been a shocking transition from the historical and ethical approach to a theological approach.

### III

This more recent trend has had a salutary effect on biblical study. It has spotlighted some weaknesses which once were regarded as strength, and demands some heart-searching evaluation of methods and goals. It also placed emphasis again upon the Bible itself and calls for a reverent study of it in the context of the sacred role it has played and still does. It has called for a re-emphasizing of sin. Along with this has come the dubious value of a more somber conception of man. It has placed emphasis again upon faith and on man's need of the mercy of God. It has re-centered the idea of the grace of God as over against man's sin and helplessness. It has called for a comprehensive view of the Bible as a unity revealing God's purposes from of old, thus avoiding the fragmenting of it by isolated analysis of each of its books. All these and other positive contributions have been made by this newer trend of biblical thought.

But by now this popular revival of biblical theology is itself calling for serious evaluation. Indeed it has been weighed in the balances of some competent scholarship and, like the liberalism it repudiated, it too has been found wanting. Among the criticisms that might be leveled against it are the following.

It has lost its real rootage in history. Having discredited the older historical Jesus, it has proceeded to emphasize the Christ of faith to such

<sup>4</sup> Vol. I. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952.

an extent that the historical reality fades into an illusion, so that the revelation of God cannot be in the historical Jesus at all. Indeed Brunner insists that God not only is not revealed in the historical life of Jesus, but he is concealed therein, concealed so completely that not even Jesus knew it! If one follows this to its logical conclusion, not only is theology defeated and biblical teaching distorted, but there is no basis for any understanding of the events that gave rise to the Christian Church. Jesus is of no more value than anyone else. Bevan so states it bluntly. Barth says that his nature was fallen human nature, that he was not a very remarkable man, only a "simple Rabbi who impresses us as a little commonplace beside more than one other founder of religion, and even alongside many later representatives of his own religion."<sup>5</sup> This undercuts what the Gospels, including the Fourth Gospel which this school emphasizes, plainly teach. So this approach in actuality cannot speak of a historical revelation.

Again, this school has fallen victim to a very poor exegesis. Barth's work on Romans may be a very remarkable book as the testimony of his soul for dark days, but it was never and can never be anything but drastic eisegesis. In Romans 1:19-21 he discovers that the real revelation of God which man had willfully suppressed was the resurrection! The truth which is obvious to all men is the resurrection. It might be added that though the obvious meaning of the passage is natural revelation, which Barth repudiates, he does further violence to Paul's idea by a use of the resurrection which is essentially non-Pauline. Paul's idea in Romans 1:19-21 is certainly not the Barthian exposition. No study of the text can give the remotest support to this preposterous claim.

What is true at this point is true again and again in the work. He makes the "Biblical doctrine of the Trinity" central, yet there is no clear-cut doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament. Or to take another neo-interpreter, Oscar Cullmann in *Christ and Time*<sup>6</sup> has arbitrarily interpreted the New Testament so that it fits a pattern of eschatological thought already carefully worked out. The Greek words which are extensively used won't bear the weight of his argument, and as Bultmann has pointed out, he has no support from a historical study of the New Testament eschatology. It would be unfair to imply that all the exegesis of this school of thought is faulty. It is charged, however, that, in many crucial areas, the school employs unworthy methods for making its points. So the charge of the newer

<sup>5</sup> Barth, K., *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I, ii, 80. *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, I, p. 188.

<sup>6</sup> The Westminster Press, 1950.

approach against the older liberalism must be laid at their door in turn. They are often *eisegetes*, not *exegetes*!

Again, the Bible has been approached with patented schemes for unity. Most of these schemes are not self-evident, nor are they convincing to any self-critical exegesis of the Bible. They must be fabricated before one studies the Scripture. The skeleton outline of the unity of the Bible presented earlier in this paper reveals the artificiality and poverty of the scheme. It is artificial because it does not grow naturally out of the exegesis of the Bible; it fails adequately to explain great blocks of the Old Testament as well as of the New. What would one do with Amos or Micah, Isaiah or Ezekiel? Where do these great spirits fit into such a scheme? The answer is that they don't. This cuts the heart out of the Old Testament and leaves it a mere shell, which would never have been preserved.

Another serious failing of this school has been an overworking of myth. If the older liberal approach was accused of a too easy modernization of the Scriptures by the application of reason to the text, this new school has sinned violently in mythological exaggerations. It can be seen in the myth of the fall, the myth of the flood, the myth of the walls of Jericho, the myth of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the myth of the Incarnation, the myth of the Second Coming. By this technique of mythologizing one could distort the Bible or any other book into almost any system desired, for the correctives are few and difficult to apply. This is essentially an irresponsible technique, with all the evils of the allegorical method of the ante-Nicene period. In an important article, Bultmann has urged a demythologizing of the New Testament. But there is even greater need to beware of the interpretative technique which labels biblical ideas as myth and then proceeds to interpret the myth according to a preconceived pattern.

To this ought to be added the easy way of using the term "kerygma" as if it spoke of a kernel always the same, and constituted the basis of a tight unity in the New Testament. Such is not the case. A thoroughgoing exegesis of the early preaching as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles would reveal a simple kerygma, thoroughly Jewish in outlook and emphasis, with very little, if any, value attached to the death of Jesus, and a most amazingly Jewish, non-Hellenic view of the redemptive techniques involved in God's gracious work. If one took the time to compare the kerygma of Acts with that of Paul the impact would be staggering, and if one made the further comparison of this kerygma with that of the Fourth Gospel the contrast would be even more unbelievable. This comparative technique ought to be

applied also to Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel. The implied kerygma of the Synoptics ought to enter the picture too. So from the simple "Man approved of God by the mighty works which God did through him . . . whom ye with cruel hands did crucify . . . whom God elevated to his right hand" to "the Logos became flesh and tabernacled among us . . . the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father" one has moved from one world of ideas to another drastically different. No, the kerygma has undergone staggering changes at every cultural shift the Church made. To speak of the kerygma in the singular is to assume more than the evidence warrants. The centrality of Jesus Christ, who died either at sinners' hands or at God's, the forgiving love of God issuing in some form of salvation, and the resurrection—this is as much agreement on the kerygma as can be safely assumed. The new theology has committed the old sin of extensive harmonization.

#### IV

Again, what has been said of the kerygma may be said also of Christology. The new theology has an elaborate Christology, as is illustrated by Brunner's *The Mediator*.<sup>7</sup> However, very little attention is given to the historical person. What he taught weighs very little in the scales of value. What explanations he gave for himself and his mission are feebly presented, if at all. *The Mediator* is a weighty volume, but not because of any serious treatment of the Man from Nazareth. The Christology also ignores the first eight chapters of Acts, and actually begins with John 1:1. Paul is given a good hearing, but Romans 1:1-4 really merits serious thought. The chief idea presented is the Incarnation, but the Synoptic Gospels, Acts 1 through 9, and Hebrews (if not other works) do not place the Incarnation in their thought at all. Again a unity is imposed from without and then everything in the New Testament is forced to conform to this interpretation.

Moreover, a Christology of the Old Testament is also presented, and the Old Testament is asked to support the theological Christology of the New Testament, meaning that of Paul and the Fourth Gospel. Now this is not good biblical exegesis, and it is unfair to the honest quest for truth. There *is* an elaborate Christology in the New Testament, but it is definitely not a consistent Christology. There are a variety of explanations for the person of Jesus and what he means. But Irenaeus seems to have become far more of a source and an authority than the biblical works themselves. As a matter of fact Brunner places Irenaeus at the top of his authorities, not Paul

<sup>7</sup> The Macmillan Company, 1934.

or other New Testament writers. Biblical theology has not based the studies in Christology on exact exegesis, so there is no check upon rash theologians who have ideas to read into the text.

There is a related area where the failing is not so much an omission or poor exegesis as a miscoloring of the interpretation. This is in the area of Ethics. If the older liberal school overemphasized ethics and called upon people optimistically to walk in the Way, the newer schools of biblical theology leave much to be desired by undermining the ethical drive. This could be illustrated by Schlink's address at Evanston. We must work for peace, because we can better spread the gospel in an era of peace. We must feed the hungry and clothe the naked because they will then listen to the gospel. The ethic of Jesus completely reverses the process! He taught that man must do and be these things because it is the will of God for man so to live. God is merciful, and man must be merciful. God forgives, and man must forgive. Love your enemies that ye may be sons of your Father. Jesus was moved with compassion. Forgive if ye have aught against any. As ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me. If one compels you to go one mile, go two. The miracles of the Synoptics are deeds of mercy because man was suffering. The motivation for ethics would seem to be much more of compassion, love, and concern for God's creation, and less of creating an opportunity to preach.

Here the Synoptic Gospels must be reintroduced, so that our ethics may become more Christian in emphasis. Actually, according to Jesus, the purposes of God are to be realized in life—life of uprightness. His message involved more a life to be lived than a doing of good in order that the gospel may be preached. On the contrary, the gospel is preached so that man may live the life of God's holy purpose. Any emphasis that falls short of this is failing to proclaim the biblical emphasis as found in the Gospels and other books of the New Testament.

Another criticism of much of the biblical theology of today is that there is a wild growth of subjectivism. We are told that the Word confronts us, but the identification of the Word is left unclear except that it is a word of Christ. "The words which are of greatest and deepest concern to us as Christians are not the words of Jesus but the words of Christ, and the authenticity of these words is not established . . . by criticism, higher or lower. The words of Christ are words which truly and at first hand set forth the event which is Christ . . . the meaning of the Church's true life. Those words attributed to Jesus in the Gospels which set this meaning forth



are authentic words."<sup>8</sup> "In faith we are not concerned with the Jesus of history as historical science sees Him, but with the Jesus Christ of personal testimony who is the real Christ."<sup>9</sup> This sounds moving and convincing till an honest exegete seeks some comprehension of what it really means. He discovers the subtle subjectivism which is fatal to all exegesis, leaving the text to the mercy of the "spiritual" inclinations of the exegete. While there may be value in the personal, individual response to Scripture, it is still a dangerous method to treat exegesis in the subjective, capricious manner.

Still another aspect of the present theological trend is the rather exaggerated emphasis upon eschatology. The tendency is to revert to a pre-scientific pattern of thought quite at home in the first century with its three-storied universe where a mythological conception felt perfectly at home. The present-day reversion to this type of eschatology assumes that the biblical view is unified, and that it is consistent with this pattern, but such is not the case. As the Church moved into the Greco-Roman world and up the scale from the undisciplined person toward the thinker, the Church changed its interpretation from the horizontal to the vertical, from the cosmic to the individual. The Fourth Gospel illustrates this process. Rudolf Bultmann in his article of September, 1954, in *New Testament Studies*, makes a serious charge against the position of Cullmann, that he has overlooked this transition in the New Testament. One could add that this same oversight has occurred in large numbers of students, not because the matter is not clear, but because the pattern of kerygma held by biblical theologians seems to demand the more primitive type of eschatology. This eschatology, which demands that one cling to the currently popular reversion to a Ptolemaic universe, cannot be used to speak to modern man.

## V.

Already there are signs that the needed changes are on the way. Oscar Cullmann in *Time Magazine* (May 2, 1955) says that "there is a trend away from Barth . . . and there is a tendency on the Continent, as in the United States, toward neo-liberalism in theology." Just a month earlier (April 6, 1955), W. Norman Pittenger pled in *The Christian Century* for a New Christian Modernism. Now these are not necessarily encouraging, since we do not know what is desired or involved in these new movements. Nevertheless, they suggest a trend and a desire for a change. And that is

<sup>8</sup> Knox, J., *Criticism and Faith*. The Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952, pp. 51-52.

<sup>9</sup> Brunner, E., *The Mediator*, p. 159, note.

good. A return to the unchanged liberal position of the last generation would not be desirable. But a change must be made, since the new theology is not saying what needs to be said.

As these schools look at Jesus, says Amos Wilder: "The Man Christ Jesus preached by the neo-orthodox is a kind of symbol 'X,' an unknown quantity—Christ is preached but it is unreality. The old orthodoxy preaches Christ, a supernatural figure, God himself,"—and neither is biblical. On the other hand, "The Man Christ Jesus preached by liberalism is a modernized prophet and teacher and gives back to us our best ideals."<sup>10</sup> What we need today is not a harking back to the past for some theological system, but we want as far as possible to discover the best and most accurate understanding of man's relationship to God's purposes. The place to start, as Wilder says, is with Jesus, "whose significance, whether as Christ or by whatever other title, is to be studied in the social-historical human situation, which is by no means undocumented for us, and not resolved for us in terms of some metaphysical or theological status bestowed upon Him from beyond the situation."<sup>11</sup>

We recognize all the problems involved, but as Dibelius and Bultmann both affirm, we are not at the mercy of skepticism so as to be forced to abdicate God-given intelligence in favor of a retreat to illogical, metaphysical, mythological verbiage. "The son of Joseph was no 'X,' nor an icon in a niche, nor a Kierkegaard in advance of his time. He was a real protagonist and actor in a human situation. He was a political and religious figure, calling to repentance, challenging corrupt institutions and authorities and expressing compassion toward the neglected and victimized of his day."<sup>12</sup> "His word and deed searched and convicted the hearts of those who heard Him, and not because He mediated an encounter with the Wholly Other at some timeless level,"<sup>13</sup> but because he invoked the supreme memories and loyalties, he stirred slumbering memories of God's plans for his people, he challenged people with a new vision of God's will. His message was inseparably tied to a definite historical situation.

Whatever the future holds by way of a new biblical point of view, it can be good and satisfying to us only when it is honestly speaking from the best, most penetrating study of the Scriptures. This means that we must revitalize the social-historical studies so that all the gains of the past may

<sup>10</sup> Wilder, A., *Otherworldliness and the New Testament*. Harper & Brothers, 1954, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 84.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.



be preserved and extended. There can be no theology of the Bible that does not utilize a methodology of "full and unhesitating scientific techniques peculiar to objective research."<sup>14</sup> Every aspect and facet of the life that gave rise to the Bible requires intensive investigation: history, religious, moral and social customs, religious beliefs, religious consciousness, and all that was woven into the religious fabric that became Christianity. Christianity did not burst into the world full grown. It grew naturally out of the soil of a Palestinian background. It was transplanted into a Greco-Roman soil and took on new characteristics from that environment. It was so much a part of its day that no reliable theology can be devised if one attempts to avoid a careful study of the historical facts of the Bible's *Sitz im Leben*. There will be of necessity a *descriptive* element in the theological presentation, recognizing the cultural contributions of early theological formulation, and a *normative* element which elevates those aspects of Christian thought which transcend all cultures.

This suggests that no biblical theology can really be formulated with meaning for our day that does not take into consideration the best intellectual and scientific advances of secular thought. To become an island, priding itself upon its essential independence of the best reason of the day, insisting upon an essential irrationality, is sure suicide for theology if continued over the long run of time. So in addition to an intensive understanding of the biblical world, the biblical theologian must also become conversant with the world in which he lives. Ancient myths and thought patterns, medieval formulae and older cosmologies all must be reinterpreted, discarded, or transcended with ideas and world views which are capable of making intelligible and convincing the essential factors of the Christian faith. Brunner and Barth are both wrong at this point, and the Church must become aware of the impossibility of playing ostrich in a world which is in need of a faith by which to live, but which will repudiate the Church if it insists on giving a stone instead of bread.

Again, the biblical theologian must frankly recognize the unsystematic variety of forms in the New Testament. There is no Christology of the New Testament; there are Christologies. There is no one divine plan of salvation: there are a variety of plans in the New Testament. There is no kerygma; there are kerygmas. Many other aspects of variety could be mentioned. Our point here is that the biblical theologian must recognize

<sup>14</sup> Baab, Otto J., "Old Testament Theology" in *The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow*, edited by H. R. Willoughby. The University of Chicago Press, 1947, p. 413.

what Baab pointed out: "the reader of Old Testament theologies . . . is impressed by the evidence which points toward the existence in the biblical writings of not one but several theologies."<sup>15</sup> There must be less of total harmonization such as Brunner did in *The Mediator*, and more of descriptive study followed by a normative formulation.

All of this presupposes that at the heart of any biblical theology there must be an effort at the best exegesis possible. This will certainly involve the historical study mentioned earlier. It will certainly involve a study of the wide sweep of the Bible to place the ideas in some sort of proper relationship. It will involve textual study and it must include philology. Because we have failed to discipline ourselves at these important points, we are failing to produce scholars who have any right to speak in the hearing of our fathers who paid the price for the right to be heard. There is no easy road to competence in this field.

So we stand at the beginning of a new development in biblical theology. We do not know what the strength of this new era will be, nor what its major emphasis will include. The term "neo-liberalism" is already being used. It is not a good term. "Post-liberalism" is positively insipid. Labels are not wise, since they prejudice a trend for good or ill beyond its merits. Let us do our part to see that, regardless of labels, this new trend does more to speak to the future than our past has done.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 410.

## 2. *Comment on the Foregoing*

MILLAR BURROWS

BEING UNABLE, because of other commitments, to prepare an adequate discussion of Dr. Branton's article, I must be content with a few running comments. Let me say first that I am in complete sympathy with his main position and applaud his vigorous statement of it. The chief fault I might find with it is one that could hardly be avoided: he has oversimplified and overgeneralized both the older liberal views of biblical theology and the more recent neo-orthodox views. There was actually never one uniform set of ideas which could be called Liberalism (with a capital L); and perhaps no one theologian would accept every point in the neo-orthodox position as Branton describes it.

Taking up more detailed points, we certainly have a better text of the Bible now than we had formerly; I doubt, however, that we "can speak with a high degree of assurance on the reliability of our text." There are countless places at which such assurance is now less justifiable than ever.

In connection with the contributions of historical studies to the interpretation of the Bible, more might be made of the extraordinary archeological discoveries of the past few decades. The languages, ideas, and institutions of the Bible are now very much better understood in the light of all the comparative material provided by archeology.

The point is well made that the typical liberal understanding of Jesus in the pre-neo-orthodox era was at fault only in not being truly historical. The effort to find an interpretation relevant for present moral and social needs was entirely laudable. The only trouble was that the world in which Jesus lived and to which he spoke was not sufficiently known. When the general world-view of first-century Palestinian Judaism came to be better understood, there were three things that might have been done. We might decide that the whole gospel would have to be discarded along with the world-view in terms of which it was presented; we might attempt to change our own understanding of the world in accord with that of Jesus and his contemporaries; or we might attempt to discover what there was in the

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gospel that was independent of all the ancient presuppositions, and formulate it in terms of a modern world-view. All three things were actually done by different thinkers. What could not legitimately be done, but undoubtedly was often done unconsciously, was to substitute our own attitudes and standards for those of Jesus.

No doubt there was a great deal of analytical, atomized study of the Bible which failed to discover its true spiritual meaning. This was simply a stage that had to be gone through. The only thing wrong with it was that it did not go far enough. The remedy was to go on all the way, not to go back again to the beginning.

Dr. Branton's sketch of the older and newer approaches to the Bible makes the impression that the change took place *within* biblical scholarship. Was it not rather a revolt of theologians against biblical scholars? The latter, as Branton remarks, recognized what was just in the criticisms leveled against them and fell in with the new way of thinking. Not all of them, however, succumbed so easily. The new reaction which Branton feels to be coming may to some extent be the result of a feeling among biblical scholars themselves that they have conceded too much to the theologians.

One fact that might have been brought out more clearly is that the neo-orthodox reaction itself was no less "culturally conditioned" than the liberal movement which preceded it. The term "crisis theology" expressed this fact very well. If the easy-going optimism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries promoted the liberal view, its collapse at the time of the first World War was a direct factor in the revolt against liberalism.

Dr. Branton has well characterized the current emphasis on the unity of the Bible and the artificial selectiveness it involves. The effort to hang everything on a single thread of redemptive history, and to find a single kerygma, leaves to one side large and important parts of the Bible. Perhaps, in his reaction against the artificial unity imposed on the Bible, Branton goes a little too far in denying any unified history of salvation or denying any single kerygma. He is entirely right, however, in insisting that there is a complicated history of ideas on this subject in the Bible itself.

The most serious matter in all of this is the removal of Jesus from his central place. The current notion that we can know nothing about the Jesus of history and are dependent entirely upon the faith of the apostolic church deserves all that Branton says about it and more. Carried out logically, it would make any historical knowledge of any person of the past impossible. It is amazing to see how the neo-orthodox way of looking at things combines

an emphasis on something called history and its central "event" with a radical skepticism as to the possibility of historical knowledge.

It does not seem to be realized that this stultifies the very idea of the Incarnation, or of any revelation in history. As Branton well says, what calls itself biblical theology "has lost its real rootage in history." The statements of theologians which he quotes in this connection make one wonder how such a theology can claim to be Christian. If the historical Jesus cannot be known, and is not particularly important anyway, then the so-called history of salvation is really not history at all but mythology. Branton's quotations from Amos Wilder hit the nail exactly on the head.

To put the eyes of faith in the place of historical knowledge, or to insist that the truth of the kerygma can be recognized only by those within the community of faith, throws us back upon what is essentially mysticism, even though the neo-orthodox theologians dislike that word. We are left a prey to the subjectivism of which Branton justly complains. It is all too easy and too common to use fine, large words without any effort to make clear what is meant by them. Take, for example, the passage Branton quotes from John Knox. How is one to recognize the "words of Christ" which are held to be more important than the words of Jesus? How is one to know that they truly "set forth the event which is Christ" (whatever that means)? By the eyes of faith? Whose faith?

Dr. Branton is certainly right in his insistence that exact historical exegesis, making full use of the best historical and philological knowledge, is an indispensable prerequisite for anything that deserves to be called biblical theology. If he is also right in seeing signs that this emphasis is coming into its own again, that is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

### 3. *The Need for a Biblical Theology*

JAMES D. SMART

#### I

THE GIST OF JAMES BRANTON'S article on "Our Present Situation in Biblical Theology" is that in recent years there has come into being a fairly homogeneous biblical theology which has its characteristic expression in the writings of Barth and Brunner, but with which "for several years now Old Testament and New Testament scholars have fallen into step." This development was a natural reaction against certain inadequacies and weaknesses of a historical-critical scholarship which was strongly under the influence of nineteenth-century liberal theology. But now this new biblical theology shows itself guilty of even greater inadequacies and weaknesses. It has cut the Christian faith loose from its rootage in history. It indulges in unworthy methods of exegesis in order to find its doctrine in Scripture. It manufactures a unity for Scripture that can be maintained only by ignoring many essential parts. It makes much of the category of myth because it can infuse into the myths of Scripture whatever meaning it pleases. It assumes one basic kerygma and one basic Christology in the New Testament, when actually a variety of kerygmas and Christologies are to be found there. It undermines the ethical drive in the Christian religion. It lets subjectivism grow wild. It places an exaggerated emphasis upon eschatology and tries to persuade modern man to revert to the Ptolemaic world-view of ancient times.

Naturally a scholarship which has developed such degenerate and unintelligent tendencies is unable to offer us any dependable interpretation of the Scriptures, and it is a matter of urgent importance that we should move on quickly to a new and more satisfactory approach. Branton then sketches the outline of this new approach and, although he objects to it being styled a new liberal modernism because that suggests merely reversion to an earlier viewpoint, what he describes falls directly into that category. We need a biblical scholarship which will center its interest upon the Jesus of history rather than the Christ of faith, which will revitalize the social-

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historical studies, which will abandon any attempt to find unity in the Scriptures and frankly recognize the variety of theologies and plans of salvation which are to be found there, and which, finally, will restate the biblical ideas in modern thought-terms, taking into consideration the best intellectual and scientific advances that have been made by modern man and leaving behind those elements in biblical thought that seem to represent a more primitive stage in man's understanding of himself and his world.

It is difficult to know where to begin in commenting upon this presentation. It will certainly astonish many biblical theologians to have Barth and Brunner taken as characteristic of their general viewpoint, however much they may have been influenced by one or the other, and it will be equally astonishing to both Barth and Brunner to be quoted as though they were close partners in a common theological sin. It will be news to American biblical theologians that they dominate the field of biblical interpretation when so recently they were fighting for a hearing among scholars who scorned to be accounted "theological," and when only a trickle of literature on biblical theology has as yet appeared on this side of the ocean. They might well plead for their moment to speak before they are rudely hustled off the stage.

Any use of the term "biblical theology" should take account of the wide variety of phenomena that are to be included within it. Martin Buber, the Jewish theologian, is a biblical theologian and not by any means the only one in modern Judaism. John Courtney Murray, the Jesuit scholar, some years ago in his magazine *Theological Studies* called for the development of a biblical theology in the Roman Catholic Church, on the grounds that only a thoroughly biblical theology had any hope of becoming a theology for ordinary men. A. G. Hebert in England has made some interesting contributions to the subject, but always eventually in the interests of Anglo-Catholic theology. Rudolf Bultmann has written two volumes on the theology of the New Testament, but no one in his right mind would suggest any similarity between his conclusions and those of Karl Barth. The three most significant German works on Old Testament theology—by Eichrodt, Procksch, and Köhler—cannot by any means be considered as products of a single "school." And it is fair to say that of all the scholars in various lands who are working at biblical theology, few would take kindly the statement that they have "fallen into step" with a single dominant viewpoint which can be reduced to a unity, described quite simply, and criticized as a unit as Branton supposes. Only confusion can result from



ignoring the complexity which exists in the field under consideration.

It is also puzzling to discover what is *new* in the approach to biblical studies which Branton projects as the next stage in development to which we should now be ready to move on. The task of restating biblical ideas in modern thought terms has been with us as a church since the earliest centuries and we cannot evade it, though history warns us to be sure that it is a genuine translation without loss of the original meaning and not a transition to another gospel. The importance of social and historical studies is recognized as much by biblical theologians as by their predecessors. This leaves the emphasis upon the Jesus of history and the insistence upon the disunity of Scripture as the chief distinctive features—which most certainly suggests a close identity with forms of biblical scholarship that are familiar to us from the past and have managed to maintain themselves into the present, in spite of the advances of a more theologically interested viewpoint.

Dr. Branton gives us the impression that liberal historical-critical scholarship was at some time swept completely from the field, so that now a new approach has to be evolved in antithesis to the biblical theologians. If necessary, one could count heads in professorial chairs to show how fallacious this supposition is. There are still plenty of unreconstructed biblical scientists of the old school, who have ever viewed the "intrusion" of theology into biblical scholarship with alarm and who would find Branton's "new" approach most congenial. Branton also writes as though there were a new school of interpretation in process of development which moves decisively out beyond all the achievements of the past, but apart from the mention of one book he gives us no opportunity of identifying the representatives of this school or of examining their productions. The quotations from the one book mentioned do not seem to suggest any strikingly original developments. The suspicion therefore forms in one's mind that the radically new approach is an old friend in slightly remodeled clothing.

## II

Objection must now be taken to the exceedingly sketchy and misleading description of how biblical theology came into being. The whole development is made to turn on Dr. Albert Schweitzer's repudiation of the various liberal portraits of the Jesus of history as unhistorical, his substitution for them of a distinctively Jewish figure who could no longer be made the incarnation of the ideals of modern man, and the consequent flight of scholars from the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith. Certainly,



Schweitzer has a place in the picture, but the forces at work were of a much more complex character, and a truer estimate of them is achieved when one keeps both Old and New Testament scholarship in view. A reader might well conclude from Branton's description that, liberal scholarship having received a severe jolt from Schweitzer, certain theologians, chief among whom were Barth and Brunner, seized the initiative in biblical studies and, under the banner of a "Back to the Bible" movement, introduced methods of biblical interpretation which were subjective and unscientific, embodying above all a clever technique for discovering their own theology in Scripture.

It may have some value, then, to inquire what were the factors which led to the recent revival of interest in biblical theology. If we go back to the earliest period of historical-critical scholarship in both Old Testament and New Testament, we find that it was taken for granted that a biblical scholar was a theologian in the service of the Church. In the first half of the nineteenth century, men such as Eichhorn, DeWette, Ewald, Vatke, and Delitzsch all considered themselves theologians as well as linguists and historians. DeWette, in addition to his work in the Old Testament field, interested himself in Protestant theology in general. Ewald and Delitzsch wrote on New Testament subjects as well as Old. And all produced volumes on Old Testament theology.

Biblical scholarship in Britain and America largely skipped this primary period, being somewhat later in development (though one finds evidences of it in the work of such men as Robertson Smith and A. B. Davidson); so that it is not difficult to understand the misconception in some quarters that in its original form historical-critical scholarship did not concern itself with theology. Actually, the conception of a biblical scholarship that would be more objectively scientific by being severely untheological belongs not to the primary but rather to the secondary stage of development. How it came to superimpose itself upon both Old and New Testament scholarship and to dominate them for several generations is an interesting and important episode in the history of the modern church.

As the nineteenth century advanced, a complex of forces led to this expulsion of theological interest from biblical studies. Foremost was the passion to make of the discipline an exact science, eliminating the subjective factor and attaining an objectivity comparable to that of the physicists and mathematicians. It was clear to any observer that all the earlier scholars had been influenced in their results by the theologies and philosophies to which they were attached—Eichhorn by his Romanticism in the wake of

Herder, DeWette by the philosophy of Fries, Vatke by his Hegelianism, and Delitzsch by his orthodox Lutheranism. But now the scholar was to divorce himself scrupulously, at least in his scientific work, from the influence of all theologies and philosophies, and thereby equip himself to arrive eventually at the truth concerning the Scriptures.

Coupled with this concern was the conviction, widely prevalent at the time, that religion was a much more concrete phenomenon than theology. Theological propositions were regarded as abstractions, but religion was a human experience that could be described with exactness. Thus it seemed much more possible to bring the religions documented in the Old and New Testaments within the scope of a descriptive science than to extract from the Scriptures a coherent theology. Moreover, the recognition of a wide variety of religious ideas and practices in both Testaments seemed to put an end to any thought of a biblical theology.

The logical development therefore was to study the religions of the Bible against the background of the religions of the Near East, and the crowning achievement of the biblical scholar was to trace the changes in religious idea and practice from the primitive forms of the patriarchal age to the purer and nobler ones of New Testament times. As Gerald Birney Smith described the state of affairs in the first quarter of the twentieth century: "Biblical scholars came to be more and more interested in the task of recovering the details of an ancient culture and in reconstructing the history of that culture. The question of the relationship of biblical scholarship to systematic theology eventually ceased to concern them."<sup>1</sup>

Gradually, as the twentieth century moved into its second quarter, the consciousness grew among biblical scholars that something was radically wrong with their method of approach. Something of the highest importance for the life of the church and for the life of man was being missed. The Bible began to reassert its claim to be not just the record of a series of antique cultures and religions, but also the medium of a revelation of God that was unique and absolute. A purely literary and historical scholarship had been unable to take account of the factor of revelation in Scripture; it had no place in its categories for a living God, only for an idea of God.

The problem that was now recognized was how the scholar could deal faithfully with the biblical records without losing the dimension of depth in them and divesting them of their original significance as witness to a decisive revelation of God. The Bible was a divine-human reality. A

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Religion* V (1925), p. 577.

century of historical-critical scholarship had concentrated upon the human factor in it almost to the point of dissolving the divine into unreality. Now its task was to remold its critical apparatus to be no less scientific but to be theologically responsible and competent in dealing with the divine factor in Scripture. No longer was it sufficient for a biblical scholar to be a linguist and cultural historian; he had also to be a theologian.

Coupled with this revolutionary development was the acknowledgment that no investigator of the Scriptures in any age could escape being a theologian, and that even those who in preceding years had been most severely intent upon being untheological had actually been influenced in their research and in their conclusions by an unacknowledged theology. The choice therefore must be always between being unconsciously a theologian and being responsibly a theologian, and the possibility of achieving objectivity in a particular piece of research is likely to be greater in the second instance than in the first.

One of the most striking discoveries of the new theological approach to biblical interpretation was that there was a much larger measure of unity in each of the Testaments and in the Bible as a whole than had long been suspected, a unity which was not a uniformity of religious ideas and practices but rather had its source in the continuity of the purpose of God at work in different ages. A science that had eyes only for the human phenomena of religion had lost the clue to the unity of Scripture. On the purely human level nothing could be found except the widest diversity. But a science that approached the Scriptures as the record of both divine revelation and human religion began to hear one voice in both Testaments and to understand the reasonableness of the canon while at the same time acknowledging the variety of religious forms and expressions.

In the background of these developments, and related to them, was the theological revival which was taking place at the same time. A generation that had found it more practical to speak of religion than of theology, and more reasonable to regard Christianity as merely the highest form of religion rather than as the revelation of absolute truth concerning God and man, suddenly was stabbed awake to its condition of perilous confusion. Churchmen, confronted with the aggressive non-Christian faiths of the modern world, demanded to know whereon their own faith was founded. And the Church, in the process of rediscovering the uniqueness of its own faith, was forced back to take with a new seriousness the authority of the revelation of God in the Scriptures. The Church therefore directed at its scholars the

question: "In what way does the Church still find in the Scriptures the criterion of its faith and life?" to which biblical science could only answer with a thoroughgoing biblical theology. Ludwig Köhler in the preface to his *Old Testament Theology* tells how he was forced to write his book by the demand of his students to know what the Old Testament had to say in answer to the crucial questions of their existence as Christians.

Biblical theology, then, was a logical and necessary development in biblical scholarship, not the adoption of a less scientific approach under pressure from theologians but rather the widening and deepening of the approach to take full account of the character of the biblical records. Errors in the findings of scholars who follow this broader approach may naturally be expected, just as there were errors in the findings of scholars at earlier stages. Therefore when a writer declares that this period in biblical scholarship has played itself out, he needs to make clear not just what seem to him to be inadequacies in specific interpretations of individual scholars, but more exactly what is invalid in the approach as a whole.

### III

Dr. Branton makes nine separate accusations against biblical theology. Some are so general and unrelated to any published material that they seem to belong in the realm rather of rumor than of scholarship. For instance, on the basis of some remarks of Edmund Schlink in an address at Chicago the charge is laid that biblical theology undermines the ethical drive. We might understand better what is meant if there were some reference to such volumes on ethics as those of Bonhoeffer and Barth. Neither seems quite to fall under the suspicion of "undermining the ethical drive." Also the blanket accusation that biblical theologians are by nature poor exegetes needs to be supported by something more than a quotation from Barth's *Commentary on Romans* (1918). Such commentaries as those on John's Gospel, in English by Hoskyns and Davies and in German by Bultmann, do not exactly suffer by comparison with their less theologically oriented predecessors. Nor is Barth to be so lightly dismissed as an exegete, particularly when examples somewhat more recent than his *Romans* are taken into consideration. A survey of the books of biblical theologians does not readily turn up evidence of a generally inferior scholarship.

The accusation that Branton sets ahead of all others is that biblical theology has lost for Christianity all real rootage in history by basing it upon the Christ of faith rather than upon the Jesus of history; in short, that it has

fallen into the docetic heresy of affirming Jesus' divinity and denying his humanity, or of separating his divinity from his humanity so that the two are unrelated—this in reaction to a liberalism that exalted Jesus' humanity at the expense of his divinity. Again it is impossible to lump all biblical theologians together. Brunner does seem at times to leave himself open to the charge of divorcing Jesus' humanity from his divinity; and so also, but in a different way, does Bultmann. But this is decidedly untrue of the Christology of Barth and others.

Large questions, however, open at this point; and we need to know whether Branton means by "rootage in history" merely an assurance of the historical reality of Jesus' earthly life, or rather a founding of the Christian religion upon the human values discoverable in the historical Jesus instead of upon the revelation of God in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is one thing to base our faith upon a revelation which actually was given in historical situations, and another to attempt to base it upon ideas or principles or values which are exemplified in certain historical personalities.

Dr. Branton's final criticism concerning an exaggerated emphasis upon eschatology seems to reflect the typical American reaction to much Continental thinking. But eschatology is as intrinsic to the Bible as to the works of European theologians. Perhaps if instead of our wealth and comfort we had experienced some of Europe's poverty and suffering and frustration, we would be able better to understand the appeal of the Bible's eschatological passages. Biblical eschatology has an importance for the total understanding of biblical faith that is only beginning to be grasped in our part of the world. The God of the Bible is a God who "comes"; and we do not rightly believe in him until we have learned what it is to await his coming. But that does not mean, as Branton seems to think, that we revert to a Ptolemaic world-view or imitate the early Christians in their expectation of an immediate return of Jesus Christ.

Not all the accusations have been answered. For that there is insufficient space. But enough perhaps has been said to suggest that the arrows of criticism have been shot too much at random. A thoroughgoing critique of the strengths and weaknesses of biblical theology could be extremely valuable; but it needs first to take account of the wide range of scholarly works of varying viewpoints that must be included within that term, and then to establish by careful analysis what trends are discoverable among them. Already the literature of the subject is large, much larger by far in

Europe than in America. In fact biblical theology was practically non-existent in America twenty years ago, and among American scholars is only yet in the early stages of its development. Far from being a "played-out" movement, it should have its most interesting growth and fruition in the years directly ahead of us.

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ED. NOTE: An additional article for this symposium was expected from Dr. Franklin W. Young of The Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Texas. Its completion was unavoidably delayed, and we shall therefore publish it in the Spring 1957 issue of RELIGION IN LIFE.



## 4. Is There a "Biblical Theology"?

ROBERT McAFEE BROWN

THERE ARE A GREAT many terms being widely and loosely used in contemporary theological discussion which cry out for more precise definition and understanding. In no area has this been truer than in the area of biblical interpretation. It is a commonplace that the new theological orientation is rooted in the Bible. And witness what happens. Theological literature is studded with references to "Biblical faith," "Biblical theology," "the 'world-view' of the Bible," "the Biblical perspective," "the unity of the Bible." We hear much discussion of "the Biblical doctrine of . . . (God, man, Christ, the church, the last things)," and (more popularly) "the Bible and . . . (sex, the U.N., smoking, politics, psychoanalysis, war)."

Running through all of this is the assumption that there is *a* biblical view, *a* biblical faith, *an* approach to the Bible, which we now have, and that the whole thing now hangs together in a way that it never did before, or, to make the claim more modest, that we have discovered how it has always hung together, in a way that our predecessors were unable to do. The theme is posed in all of its acuteness for the Presbyterian ordinand: "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church as containing *the system of doctrine* taught in the Holy Scriptures?"

There are ways by which this question can be answered in the affirmative, but the lurking sense of inquiet remains unstilled in many a Presbyterian heart: *is* Scripture really for the purpose of giving us a "system of doctrine?" Does it contain "doctrines," does it teach a "system"? Is the Bible a kind of textbook in systematic theology?

It is clear that the problem is raised for us partly by the fact that we stand in a "new" situation, namely on *this* side of the advent of biblical criticism. This is not the place for an analysis of the breakdown of fundamentalism, which, whatever its shortcomings, could point to the Bible as authoritative in a consistent over-all system of propositional revelation. God had not only acted in the past, but he had left a record of those actions,

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self-authenticating in every respect, beyond the possibility of error. The authority of the Bible could thus be proclaimed in stern, uncompromising terms. But it is clear that this answer is no longer adequate. Not only is the "infallible" character of the book shown to be open to serious question, but the whole conception of revelation here presupposed is at odds with the biblical account (thus is one hoisted on his own petard) of how God makes himself known.

Can the authority of the Bible, therefore, be reclaimed in Protestant thought with anything like the vigor it once was claimed, and still do justice to the revolution in biblical studies in the last fifty years, accommodate itself to errors in the text, and expound a more ultimate norm for understanding how God acts than simply insisting that "It says so in the Bible"?

The facility with which this question is answered in the affirmative in contemporary theological thought immediately renders the answers suspect. At the very least, it makes it necessary to examine again some of the ways in which this is done, and to look at whatever loose ends still remain after the attempt has been made.

# I

One line of attack points out that obviously not everything in the Bible can be taken at face value, and that some parts are more important than other parts. The thing to do is to extract a central authoritative core of biblical affirmations to which the Christian can hold, and to which (to be true to the faith) he *must* hold, come hell or high water. Beyond that central authoritative core he need not stand committed to defend every jot and tittle of the biblical material. Thus he disposes of the sun standing still, the ascension, a liberal sprinkling of miracles, and the sin against the Holy Ghost (which, like "Q," no man hath seen at any time).

And this immediately poses the problem: just how does one choose or determine that central authoritative core? It can be done by following the approach of someone like Professor C. H. Dodd. Let us penetrate back to the earliest Christian preaching, his followers suggest, and find what things were normative for the faith of the early church. These we can take as normative for our own faith today.

All well and good. And Professor Dodd makes a very persuasive case for his particular evaluation of the primitive *kerygma*. But this evaluation is not one that, say, Professors Enslin or Major would accept. Their evaluation might be radically different. On what basis, then, are we to pick and choose? Why, for example, should we exclude the ecstatic fervor of the



early church while retaining a doctrine of the Holy Spirit? Why should we decide that adoptionist Christology is not normative? Why, in fact, should what is earlier necessarily be more authentic than what comes later? And, finally, why should we be tied to the first 150 years of Christian history, in deciding what is essential to the content of our faith?

## II

However, the difficulties are not avoided by jumping out of the first 150 years. For there is a tendency among the various families of Christendom to take developments which came later in their own traditions and make them normative for the interpretation of Scripture. Biblical criticism has fortunately shown up the fallacy of trying to establish any one church polity, whether presbyterial, congregational, or even episcopal, as normative in the early church. But there is a tendency to adopt an overarching principle of theological interpretation and make it normative for the reading of Scripture. This principle may be the sovereignty of God as in Calvinism, it may be justification by faith as in Lutheranism, it may be the sacramental universe as in Anglicanism, it may be the inner light as in sectarianism—but in each case Scripture is read and appropriated in the light of a principle or principles derived in part from it and in part read into it. This has its dangers, best illustrated perhaps by Luther's famous characterization of James as an "epistle of straw."

Why an epistle of straw? Because, apparently, it did not teach the doctrine of justification by faith. Which, then, is ultimate? Justification by faith or the canon of Holy Scripture?

## III

Thus the problems mount if we take a part of Scripture (or Scripture interpreted by tradition) and make it normative for the rest. But is there any way of avoiding this? Is not the alternative the very difficult one of asserting that somehow all of Scripture is consistent with itself? Can it seriously be maintained that there is a *unity* to "Biblical faith" which overarches all the apparent inconsistencies? The tendency now seems to be to say "yes." Whereas a decade ago Ernest Scott was reminding us of *The Varieties of New Testament Religion*, today H. H. Rowley is reminding us of *The Unity of the Bible*.

Clearly, if this position is to be defended today it must be done in ways dissimilar to those of the past. We can no longer regard the Bible as a kind

of static deposit of "faith." Without (let us hope) succumbing to the evolutionistic views of "progressive revelation" so popular a couple of decades ago, we must find an interpretation of Scripture which does justice to the *dynamic* quality of God's activity as he relates himself to men, and also to the necessity of receptivity on men's parts. We have to affirm, in other words, that God reveals himself in his actions, in what he does, and this not in a way which is totally coercive for faith, but so that men must respond to his activity in their finitude, sin, ignorance, willful disobedience, and perverted understanding. What they understand of God will always be something less, and something other, than God himself. But it is only in the living encounter between God and men that faith becomes a possibility.

"Encounter." The word has at last been used, and must, for the moment at least, be defended. It is associated in contemporary theological thought particularly with the work of Emil Brunner, with all of the surcharges of theological emotion which that name in its own turn conjures up. Brunner in a very forceful polemic against "propositional revelation" makes clear that only as God in some sense confronts man, "encounters" him in living relationship, can God reveal himself. We find this sort of encounter taking place in the lives of men of faith, and accounts of it are preserved within the pages of Holy Scripture. Here is the story of God's dealings with men. And as we live within their situation, involve ourselves in what God is saying to them, it is possible for God to speak to us, for his "Word" to become a "living Word," for the encounter between God and "man" to become an encounter between God and us.

In this sense, the Bible "speaks" to us, right where we are, and God confronts us through its pages, so that we are forced to decide, to respond, to say yes or no. As Barth puts it, in one of his early writings, "The Bible is a special delivery letter with your name and address on it." It cannot be dismissed as a book dealing only with the dead past; it must be appropriated as a book dealing with the living present, and not only with the living present in general, but with *my* living present in particular. It is not enough to study the documents, ascertain the conditions under which they were written, work out a list of variant readings, and explode the traditional case for the authorship. Beyond all that, the question has to be asked, "What does this say to *me* in *my* situation *today*?"

So Brunner. The position has the advantages of a respect for scholarship and a recognition that scholarship is not enough. It can be pre-eminently a "preacher's theology," through which the Word becomes relevant and alive.

## IV

Professor Tillich appears, however, to take issue with this position in his Terry Lectures, *The Courage to Be*. The "divine-human encounter" does not make room enough for the fact of despair about the meaning of life. As an alternative, Dr. Tillich suggests "absolute faith" which "has no special content." This does not become mere subjectivism, however, since it is (a) an experience of the power of being, (b) it recognizes that even in despair one has enough being to make despair possible, and (c) it involves the acceptance of being accepted.<sup>1</sup> After pointing out how this absolute faith transcends the mystical experience, Dr. Tillich continues:

Absolute faith also transcends the divine-human encounter. In this encounter the subject-object scheme is valid: a definite subject (man) meets a definite object (God). One can reverse this statement and say that a definite subject (God) meets a definite object (man). *But in both cases the attack of doubt undercuts the subject-object structure.* The theologians who speak so strongly and with such self-certainty about the divine-human encounter should be aware of a situation in which this encounter is prevented by radical doubt and nothing is left but absolute faith. The acceptance of such a situation as religiously valid has, however, the consequence that the concrete contents of ordinary faith must be subjected to criticism and transformation. The courage to be in its radical form is a key to an idea of God which transcends both mysticism and the person-to-person encounter.<sup>2</sup>

Now this is a telling indictment. And to it may perhaps be added the further consideration that those who push so strongly for "encounter" theology, usually leave their hearers a little mystified by precisely what it is in which this encounter consists. What does it mean to have an "encounter" with God? What "happens"? Need it happen spectacularly? Is it ongoing and sustaining? And to those who have no such experience, is there more to be said than simply that if they maintain openness God may one day encounter them? What are they to do in the meantime?

If, in such a situation, we follow Dr. Tillich's advice, that "the concrete contents of ordinary faith must be subjected to criticism and transformation," what will happen? Will we dissolve the God of *biblical* faith into something else? Perhaps the word "ordinary" is important in the lines quoted above. Does he mean that the content of "ordinary" faith will be transformed into "real" faith? Dr. Tillich's latest book, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*,<sup>3</sup> makes an impressive case for the fact that the God of biblical faith and "the ground of being" are not two different

<sup>1</sup> Tillich, Paul, *The Courage to Be*. Yale University Press, 1952, pp. 176-177.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178, italics added. Austin Farrer, in *The Glass of Vision* (A. Allenson, 1948), has also attacked "encounter" theology, though with considerably less emotional restraint.

<sup>3</sup> The Chicago University Press, 1955.

gods. If this is so, it would seem as though ultimately the contentless "absolute faith" of *The Courage to Be* could be merged with faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who, Dr. Tillich avers, is also the God of the philosophers, whatever else to the contrary Pascal may have thought.

This may make it possible to assert that in going through the experience of despair and doubt (in which state "encounter-theology" leaves the despairer and doubter cold), one can finally come to the "God above God," and in that situation rediscover the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not to mention the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Possibly "the encounter which is no encounter" (if the phrase is admissible) may, by virtue of that very fact, drive the individual through his despair to a more authentic trust than would be possible by premature giving up of the quest, and by too easy a repose in the repetition of phrases culled from the most eminent of the neo-orthodox. And, as Dr. Tillich's sermons illustrate admirably, there is encounter possible between the Word and the individual who hears the Word. So we do not jettison the Bible by listening to Tillich's plea in *The Courage to Be*, but make it possible to re-establish its relevance more firmly than ever. Or so, at least, this writer would hope.

## V

But another way of appropriating or interpreting Scripture calls for examination. Reinhold Niebuhr, followed by a whole host of lesser witnesses, has developed the thesis that "Biblical faith," or "Hebraic-Christian faith," or the way of looking at life which we discover in the Bible, is, in part at least, self-authenticating. Thus, while one cannot "prove" that the biblical perspective is true, one can by means of it do at least two things.

1. One can show up the shallowness and inadequacy of other ways of looking at life, demonstrating that what they assert to be true about life is not vindicated by the facts of life themselves. In this sense, "contemporary history has refuted contemporary culture." Whether the view is Marxism, humanism, socialism, or even Republicanism, the assertions made by these "isms" do not conform to the actual situation. Biblical faith gives a vantage point from which this kind of assessment of alternatives can be made.

2. But, more importantly, biblical faith also provides a stage from which one can see some coherences in life. Amid a great deal that is uncertain, tragic, and bizarre, some things emerge as true and unshaken. By looking at life through biblical eyes, one discovers that the biblical view authenticates itself in experience. The insights of the prophets turn out to

be true insights; the eschatological dimension of the New Testament provides a framework within which one can look at contemporary history without succumbing to ultimate despair. And so forth. It should be underlined again that mystery is not hereby dispelled, but mystery is placed within a penumbra, at least, of meaning, and enough meaning is discovered so that the venture of faith can be made.

Once again, this is an impressive answer, and provides a kind of "relevance" for the biblical message without which it would surely fail to speak in compelling terms to twentieth-century man. But once again, we have to push back to criteria involved in selecting the biblical insights which are to be self-authenticating. This kind of view is only possible in the "post-critical" era, in which it can be affirmed that there are various levels of insight in the Bible. We do not guide our conduct by deciding that it is God's will that we slay the women and children of the Amalekites. We do not look at life today in terms of a literal "Second Coming," though the myth provides an insight of value. We do not look at life finally through the eyes of Koheleth, but through the eyes of St. Paul. And to make such a statement is immediately to be made aware that some people do not accept the latter guide, but prefer what they choose to call "the Galilean carpenter." In other words, there is certainly a high degree of discrimination involved in selecting those elements of the biblical perspective which we find to be self-authenticating.

## VI

But let us go on from this difficulty to a further consideration of the "embarrassing" passages. What has been said thus far might seem to suggest that the procedure involves finding an insight in modern culture and then seeking a biblical basis for it. Such an indictment is certainly unfair. For just the reverse seems very often to happen. It is out of many of the so-called "hard" passages of the Bible that new insights have come for men. In a time when the stress was on the "love" of God, often conceived in somewhat sentimental terms, those who continued to read their Bible were brought up short by the realization that this was not the whole story. And the sense of God's judgment, of crisis, in God's dealings with men began to creep back into the theological picture. This was at first very unpopular, but the events of subsequent history have served to confirm the need for this stress.

An example on a different level, of the same point, regards the

"begats." They are often omitted from Bibles designed to be read as living literature. And yet, the biblical scholars are never tired of telling us how significant they are, how much they tell us about the sense of history which the Jews possessed, how they underline the interrelatedness of man with man under God, how they stress the corporate aspect of human life, and so forth. In other words, even the "begats" can have revelatory significance for us. The same may be true of *every* part of the canon.

Such a possibility does not dispose of all the problems. It is difficult to see how one could conscientiously expect vindication at the hand of the Lord for dashing children's heads against the rocks. But at all events, perhaps an openness to the "strange" parts of the Bible has been shown to be necessary. Perhaps it is most necessary of all to be open to the "strange" parts, since otherwise we are always in danger of doing no more than reading our own whims and insights into the parts of the Bible that we do "understand." The cloven hoof of eisegesis tempts us all.

## VII

Thus in all of the discussion it has been clear that one of our greatest temptations is to smuggle in our own criteria and project them upon the biblical message. The danger is that we will, in effect, speak to the Bible, rather than letting the Bible speak to us. In conclusion, then, let us see if two affirmations of the Reformers can help us face our problem.

1. Can we reassert today anything coming close to their insistence that the Bible must be read in terms of *the testimony of the Holy Spirit*? We do not believe that the Holy Spirit operated on the writers of Scripture in quite the compulsive and overriding fashion that the Reformers thought he did. But must we not continue to affirm that the biblical canon betrays the marks of his activity? Those who wrote certainly kept themselves open (or were kept open) to the creative activity of God as they wrote. And unless we are to insist that the Bible is just the same as any other book, we are certainly obligated to approach the Bible and the reading of the Bible in a way different from that in which we approach T. S. Eliot or Mickey Spillane. Calvin used to precede the reading of the Scripture in church with a prayer for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, that as he had moved the hearts of those who wrote these words, he might also move the hearts of those who were to hear the words. When that prayer was answered, the Bible could indeed be a means by which God and man confronted one another.

Now it may be that the Reformers did not develop the implications of this doctrine as fully as they might have. When the chips were down, they



tended to rely on a kind of bibliolatry. Luther, for example, did not give much credence to the notion that the Holy Spirit might be breathing upon the heart of Zwingli, in the controversy over *Hoc est meum corpus*. Perhaps what is needed is a kind of tension between the continual testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, and the continual testimony of the Holy Scriptures in the hearts of men. The excesses of the sectarians made clear to Calvin that there was no necessary correlation between the testimony of the Holy Spirit and a report on the part of an individual concerning the testimony of the Holy Spirit to him. So that to guard against this subjectivism, the authority of Holy Scripture served as an important and necessary bulwark to Calvin. But one wishes there had been a little more emphasis given to the "testimony of the Holy Spirit" when some of the sons of Calvin were willing to drown the women of their community in fidelity to the scriptural injunction, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

2. Perhaps the kind of tension which is being sought can be better underlined by a look at the twin Reformation doctrine to be considered, *the doctrine of the Word*. The Reformers were, above all else, people of the Word. What does this mean for us today? Without a detailed exegetical examination, it seems clear that the Bible talks about God's Word as his creative activity, the means by which he relates himself to the world he creates and continually sustains. In the New Testament, the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us, and this not just in the sense of the Greek *logos* but also in terms of the Hebraic *dabar*. The Word, when all is said and done, is Jesus Christ. Ultimate authority resides in him. Ultimate allegiance must be given to him. But since men find out what they know of this Jesus Christ through the Bible, the Bible is often called the Word of God. (In similar fashion, and for a similar reason, the Reformers often referred to the Sacraments as the "enacted" Word.) If the Bible replaces Christ, we have bibliolatry. But equally, if the Bible is displaced, we no longer have Christ. The point of Christian living is fidelity to him, not fidelity to the Bible. We are to believe in him, not to believe "in the Bible."

The need, then, if we are to ascertain the meaning of Scripture, is to keep alive the creative tension between the doctrine of the Word, the absolute centrality for faith of Jesus Christ, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, so that we do not on the one hand imprison the Word within words, or on the other hand destroy the Word by a too-freewheeling "spirituality."

Such an approach does not begin to solve the problems. In fact, it only begins to state them. But it is surely only within some such context that they can be adequately worked out.



# The Historical Jesus and the Church's Kerygma

JAMES M. ROBINSON

THE RELATION of Jesus' teaching to the theology of the early church is one of the "outstanding" questions of New Testament scholarship—outstanding both in the sense of "important" and in the sense of "not yet resolved." This is particularly obvious when one investigates the relation of Jesus' views about himself to the church's *kerygma* about him. This question is of considerable importance, and yet it is a question about which there is no general consensus of scholarly opinion. The purpose of the present paper is to locate one of the reasons why scholarship has not reached a conclusive result here, and to suggest and illustrate one method for moving toward a resolution of the problem.

## I

The early church believed that Jesus had become Lord of the universe and of the church. In their religious experience they communed with this Lord, and received his guidance. Since this Lord was the resurrected Jesus, they were not interested in distinguishing clearly between sayings of the historical Jesus and the guidance of the heavenly Lord. In more recent times scholarship became interested in making this distinction, and "the quest of the historical Jesus" began. This definition of the historian's task placed a premium upon methods which would distinguish the historical Jesus from the church's Christology. These methods succeeded to such an extent that, after an initial period of modernizing Jesus, we have now achieved a fairly clear picture of the historical Jesus.

There is, however, one point at which these methods did not fully succeed, for the clear distinction of the historical Jesus from the primitive church gave rise to a new historical problem: How can the historian explain the rise of a movement so different from its founder? Where are the lines of historical continuity?

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Here is an aspect of the history of Jesus and the early church which has not been fully clarified. This is partly due to various factors other than method, such as the lack of sources for the Palestinian church. But it may also be due to limitations of method, resulting from the one-sided definition of the historian's task as that of distinguishing the historical Jesus from the church. A summary of two of the outstanding methods for establishing the authenticity of sayings of Jesus will demonstrate this possibility.

It is considered that sayings which sound like the vocabulary, setting, or viewpoint of the early church are more likely to have been created within the church; while only such sayings as do not fit there are likely to have originated with Jesus himself. The only occasions on which this method could admit an agreement would be when the same viewpoint is expressed in quite different terms. Thus although this method does not exclude areas of agreement, it clearly tends to establish an inverse ratio between the degree of agreement and the degree of authenticity: the more agreement, the less authenticity. Therefore, when we construct a view of the historical Jesus based to a considerable extent upon this method, it is possible to get a "historical Jesus" more clearly distinct from the church than Jesus of Nazareth actually was. For if there were an area of overlapping between Jesus and the church (as one might expect between a founder and the group he founds), this method would have difficulty in demonstrating it.

Another similar method for determining the authenticity of a saying is to examine it in terms of what ideas were possible within a certain culture at a certain time. Jesus lived within Judaism, and therefore it is easier to concede that he held a particular view, if it can be demonstrated that it was a current view within Judaism at that time. This method sets up a direct ratio between the degree of agreement with Judaism and the degree of authenticity: the more Jewish, the more authentic. This method is just one instance of the historian's traditional difficulty in handling the creative genius. We prove authenticity by proving an idea not to be original, and thus set up an inverse ratio between originality and authenticity: the more original, the less authentic.

Now when these two methods are used to establish the viewpoint of the historical Jesus, an unintentional but unavoidable tendency is established to define him in a more Jewish and less Christian, a more conventional and less original direction.

## II

When one observes the present status of research into the teachings of

the historical Jesus, one can see the effect of these methodological limitations. The parts of Jesus' teachings which are firmly established among leading scholars are his eschatology and his ethics. This is at least in part due to the fact that his eschatology and ethics grow out of the current Jewish background, and to the fact that the view of the church moved progressively away from the radicality of Jesus' eschatology and ethics. But when one turns to the discussion of Jesus' view of himself and of his destiny, one enters into an area where there is the greatest lack of scholarly unanimity. This is not due to the absence of source material on this topic in the Gospels, for it is in quantity comparable to the material on eschatology and ethics. Rather the authenticity of the sayings is in question, and this is to a large extent due to the similarity of these teachings to the church's kerygma, and their dissimilarity to contemporary Judaism. Those who conclude that a certain saying is inauthentic, argue that it shows clearly the mind of the church, and would hardly be attributable to a Palestinian Jew; those who hold that the saying in question is authentic, argue that the saying is, after all, different from the view of the church, and does have some precedents in Judaism.

A few instances can illustrate this formal aspect of the discussion. In the Gospels, Jesus speaks frequently of the "Son of Man." One leading view concedes that Jesus used the expression to refer to the future apocalyptic judge coming on the clouds of heaven, but that he used the term as a self-designation only in the un-messianic, idiomatic meaning of "I"—because this is the usage of contemporary Judaism. The other view holds that the sayings of Jesus describing him as the apocalyptic "Son of Man" could be authentic, since there is a precedent in Judaism: in the book of Enoch, the Son of Man is described at some length, and then it is revealed to Enoch that he himself is that heavenly Son of Man. This argument from precedent has been held to be inconclusive, on the basis that it is not near enough to the view attributed to Jesus to provide a real parallel. Enoch is not the author of the book; the author did not conceive of *himself* as sometime coming on the clouds as Son of Man. Rather he could only conceive of one of the patriarchs of Genesis (Enoch), the one who had been taken up into heaven, as becoming the heavenly Son of Man.

In the Gospels, Jesus predicts repeatedly his coming death and resurrection, and speaks of it as a "ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45). The authenticity of these sayings had been often rejected on the basis that this view is a "Paulinism," or, to be more correct, is a central motif of the kerygma.

When Friedrich Büchsel in the article on "ransom" in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch* defended the authenticity of Mk. 10:45, he did so by attempting to prove that this is not exactly the view of the early church. Similarly Joachim Jeremias defends the authenticity of some of Jesus' allusions to his coming passion (e.g. Mt. 23:37), on the basis of their divergence from the actual passion story as known by the church. Similarly the authenticity of Jesus' prediction of resurrection is supported by the observation that the church's standard formula "on the third day" does not occur in some instances, and that the older form of the saying, "after three days," has a somewhat different idea. One further argues that the idea of God vindicating the suffering saint is documented within Judaism, e.g. by Josephus with regard to the death of John the Baptist, and in the Talmud with regard to Rabbi Akiba; IV Ezra presents the Messiah as dying with the old aeon, and rising with the new aeon.

So the debate goes back and forth, within the limitations imposed by scholarly methodology. On both sides the areas of divergence from Judaism and of identity with the church which may have existed in Jesus' actual teaching become relatively invisible—largely because our methods are designed to define the historical Jesus in terms of his background and to distinguish him from the church.

### III

The question is legitimate, as to whether methods cannot be developed which would be less awkward in studying the problem of the historical continuity between Jesus and the church. This is not to suppose that the present methods are to be discontinued. Their legitimacy is evident to any historian, and their usefulness is attested by the quantity of light which has been shed on our knowledge of the historical Jesus by making use of them. The situation is, rather, that a scholarly impasse in a certain area points to a limitation in current methods, and calls for a supplement to these methods.

One such supplementary method is here proposed and illustrated. The current methods were set up for the purpose of establishing the authenticity of sayings, and succeeded to such an extent that one has a quantity of sayings of Jesus whose authenticity is generally accepted among leading scholars. Perhaps the scholar who is most critical at this point is Rudolf Bultmann; and yet he cites sufficient material to establish Jesus' views on eschatology and ethics. Since we therefore have a body of material whose authenticity is no longer in need of proof, a method can be developed which presupposes

this fact and builds upon this material. One can investigate the known teachings of Jesus for antecedents of the church's kerygma; and one can investigate the church's kerygma for an expression of Jesus' known teachings.

On the purely linguistic level this approach may have only limited results. For even a verse whose authenticity is conceded, in view of its eschatological or ethical content, could contain terms later interpolated or reinterpreted (compare e.g. Mk. 3:28 with Q: Mt. 12:32 and Lk. 12:10). Nor has it proven very successful to look for instances of the church's kerygma which cite authentic sayings of Jesus, since the kerygma in Paul and Acts did not sense the same obligation to appeal specifically to sayings of Jesus as it did to appeal directly to Scripture. Some unacknowledged continuity of kerygmatic terminology may be detected, e.g. from the Q saying of Mt. 11:12 and Lk. 16:16 to the stereotyped kerygmatic phrase, "beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us"<sup>1</sup> (Acts 1:22; cf. 10:37 and 1:1f.), which on the one hand indicated the limits of the written Gospel and on the other mediated the shift of emphasis to the cross and resurrection in 1 Cor. 15:3 ff. Of course the Gospels enter actively upon the endeavor of showing Jesus as preaching the kerygma; but it is the authenticity of precisely this part of the Gospels which is under discussion.

It is, however, possible to penetrate more deeply into the meaning of the known teaching of Jesus and of the kerygma, to see if there is any point of connection on the level of meanings, beyond what is visible on the surface. For one may certainly assume some degree of theological profundity beneath the language of Jesus and the kerygma. When one considers that Jesus and the kerygma had in common both the ideology of Jewish eschatology and a confrontation with the basic human problem, it is legitimate to assume that Jesus communicated meanings as well as terms, and that these meanings could find expression not only in the language of Jesus but also in alternate language of the same ideology.

For example, "death" is a central biblical category for discussing the human dilemma, and certainly the kerygma's message of the resurrection must be understood not only as the announcement of a miracle, but, more basically, the announcement of the eschatological deliverance from that dilemma. Therefore in inquiring into the relation of this part of the kerygma to Jesus' teaching, one must not only inquire whether Jesus predicted his resurrection, but also whether he understood himself to be free

<sup>1</sup> Quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

from that dilemma and as being instrumental in that eschatological deliverance. If such were the case, this would make it more probable that Jesus could have used language similar to the kerygma, and, even apart from that possibility, it could provide part of the historical explanation of the kerygma.

#### IV

One may illustrate this proposed method by beginning with the generally accepted eschatological teaching of Jesus. Jesus made available a decision with regard to the kingdom, and thus brought into the present a day of judgment which would admit to or exclude from the kingdom. Jesus' followers entered into an existential relation to the kingdom, and thus enjoyed already its blessing; Jesus' opponents decided against such a relation, and thus fell under Jesus' woes of condemnation. Therefore Jesus could present his preaching as the last sign before the end, and could predict a final condemnation at the judgment for having repudiated his "preaching" greater than Jonah or "wisdom" greater than Solomon. Similarly he pointed to his actions as not done by himself, but by God, so that to reject his actions was to break with God: "Every one who speaks a word against me will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (this is the form of the saying which explains the readings of Mark 3:28 f. and of Q: Mt. 12:32 and Lk. 12:10). He points to the "mighty works" done in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum as sufficient evidence to have brought forth repentance in Tyre, Sidon, or Sodom—these will therefore condemn the Galilean cities at the judgment (Q: Mt. 11:21 ff.; Lk. 10:13 ff.). This parallel evaluation of his preaching and action is brought together in the answer to John the Baptist (Q: Mt. 11:4-6; Lk. 7:22 f.), so that the reference to "my words" and "my works" can lead to a reference to "me": "And blessed is he who takes no offense at me." "Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mk. 8:38 and parallels).

But Jesus looks upon his sayings and actions not only as signs, but also as instrumental in overthrowing the reign of Satan and inaugurating God's reign. Following upon the binding of Satan, Jesus is plundering him (Mk. 3:27), so that in his exorcisms "God's reign has come upon you" (Q: Mt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20). Therefore one of the two current interpretations of the saying about the kingdom of God "in the midst of you" (Lk. 17:20 f.) sees in Jesus' presence a presence of the kingdom. (The other



interpretation is futuristic, as in Lk. 17:24: when the kingdom comes, it will be suddenly in your midst without warning signs.) Just as Jesus' message moves the hearers forward into the day of judgment and into contact with the kingdom, his action brings the power (or Spirit) of the kingdom into the present, so that the present is characterized not only by the last sign, but also by the actual process of inaugurating the kingdom. Jesus is both sign and agent.

Here, then, is the historical point of departure for the subsequent attribution to Jesus by the church of Messianic and divine titles. There is a terminological growth from "not me, but the Spirit in me," to "my words and my works," to "me," and on via the Messianic titles to the supreme Johannine "I am . . ." statements. For the reasons stated earlier it is difficult to determine how far in this movement within the history of ideas Jesus himself went, and when he left off and the church took over. But this problem in the history of ideas, interesting though it is, fades in importance before the fact of crucial importance for the historical understanding and theological evaluation of Jesus and the early church: These titles are a development inaugurated within the humble self-consciousness of the historical Jesus.

# V

One may also illustrate this method of taking one's point of departure in the generally accepted ethical teachings of Jesus. The radical nature of Jesus' ethics, when done in a non-ideal society (the "present evil aeon"), involve already the probability of suffering. Can one love God with *all* one's heart, soul, and strength, and one's neighbor *as oneself*, without getting involved in hardship, opposition, and suffering? Is it not probable that a person who taught and performed such an ethic would expect to have to suffer?

This probability can be illustrated from the experience of Rabbi Akiba, the rabbi who first summarized the law in the precept of loving one's neighbor as oneself. The Talmud records the story of his execution by the Gentiles at Caesarea in A.D. 135:

As they led Rabbi Akiba out to be executed, it was the time of day for reciting the Shema [Dt. 6:4 f.]. They combed his flesh off him with iron hooks, and he recited the Shema. His pupils said to him: Teacher, don't go on! He replied: My whole life long I have been worried about this [next] verse, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your soul," i.e. even if God takes your soul (or life). I said: When will I have occasion to fulfill that? And now (that I have the occasion), should I not fulfill it? He drew out the word "one" [vs. 4: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one], until his soul flowed out with this word!



The first Jerusalem Targum also interprets "with all your soul" as dying for God. If Rabbi Akiba had worried "his whole life long" about Dt. 6:5 as involving martyrdom, and if this interpretation of the verse was not unique with him, is it not somewhat unreasonable to assume that Jesus, who elevated that verse to the "first commandment," saw no implication of suffering and death in his ethics?

Within Jesus' ethical teachings, much of their radicality is expressed in terms of suffering and sacrifice.

Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. (Q: Mt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58.)

Blessed are you poor, . . . you that hunger now, . . . you that weep now, . . . but woe to you that are rich, . . . you that are full now, . . . you that laugh now . . . (Q: Lk. 6:20 ff.; Mt. 5:3 ff.)

Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (Q: Mt. 5:39-41; Lk. 6:29.)

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell." (Mk. 9:43-47.)

When the radicality of Jesus' ethics is thus stated in the language of suffering, it is not necessary to conjecture whether a radical ethic would lead to the idea of suffering; the radicality of the ethic *is* an idea of suffering.

All of Jesus' ethics speak of suffering and persecution, since they were ideal ethics, to be done in a non-ideal society. And Jesus' life speaks of suffering and persecution, since he *did* an ideal ethic in a non-ideal society. Just as one encountered the kingdom in both Jesus' words and his actions, one encounters his ethics in both his words and his actions. One can see at this point the relative unimportance of whether each such saying is historically authentic. Even if one concludes that the statement "Take up your cross and follow me" could not have been said by the historical Jesus, since the cross was not a Christian symbol until after the crucifixion, do not Jesus' most authentic teachings *mean* precisely this? Jesus may have said "put your hand to the plow" rather than "take up your cross," but when Jesus' hand on the plow led him to the crucifixion, doesn't it sound a bit anti-climactic to stress the "inauthenticity" of the saying and to disassociate its deeper meaning from the "historical Jesus"?

Death is not only a problem at the end of life, but rather casts its

shadow over the whole of life. This is not simply because one could die any minute, for this would only be the problem at the end of life stated in a neurotic way. But even when we feel physically secure and are operating on the assumption that our death is a distant event, death remains a present problem. For our life has the problem of living, and our common sense is in terms of the realistic struggle for existence. The Bible was clearly aware of this demonic significance of death, so that the concept came to have a broad symbolic connotation.

We have to do our living for the sake of living, and this conflicts with Jesus' ethic to the effect that we should be doing our living without self-reflection. Therefore Jesus' own performance of his ethic is his victory over death, a victory which is dramatically portrayed in Gethsemane. Jesus' encounter with the coming kingdom was so complete that he could see on the horizon only the vindication of God's will, so that coming death ceased to be a veto over obedience. Instead, suffering and coming death are the only "empirical evidence" that one's performance corresponds to the radicality of one's ethic, just as it is "empirical evidence" of the existence of the present evil age. But precisely the fact that suffering and coming death have ceased to be the determinative factors around which life is oriented reveals that the power of that evil age has been overcome and that one is free (cf. 1 Cor. 15:56 f.). The radicality of Jesus' obedience reveals an awareness of his freedom from the demonic power of the present evil age. Jesus has accepted his death, and moved on. This is the point of departure within Jesus' self-consciousness for the kerygma's proclamation of the miracle of the resurrection.

Even if Jesus' ethics were such as to force upon him an awareness that action based on this ethic would produce suffering, the question still remains, as to the relation of that hardship to God's saving action for the world. Yet Jesus' understanding of his action, e.g. in the exorcism struggles, as instrumental in overthrowing Satan and inaugurating God's reign, makes it possible to comprehend historically the telling of the crucifixion and resurrection as a kerygma of saving significance: Jesus himself had begun the process of interpreting his struggle and suffering as God's action overthrowing Satan and inaugurating the kingdom, so that the basis was already laid for interpreting his crucifixion as a struggle with a demonically-understood death, and his resurrection as a definitive victory over sin and death achieved for all mankind, and administered from heaven by the enthroned Christ. Here, too, there is a terminological growth from Jesus' sayings about his

"mighty works" or the "finger of God" in his exorcisms, to his death a "ransom" for many, his blood poured out for many. The unity within this development finds expression in the Johannine reference both to Jesus' "works" and to his crucifixion-exaltation as his "glorification."

Again it is unclear, for the reasons stated earlier, how far Jesus himself went in this interpretation of his action, struggle, and suffering as the saving action inaugurating the kingdom. But here too, it is not crucial *where* in this process in the growth of doctrine the historical Jesus left off and the heavenly Lord took over. What is important is that the kerygma is not talking about a person who never existed (i.e. it is not completely foreign to Jesus' own existential thinking), but rather it stands in a positive relation to the viewpoint of the historical Jesus.

## Preaching to the "New" American

ROBERT G. MIDDLETON

IN 1782 ST. JEAN DE CRÈVECOEUR, a perceptive Frenchman, attempted to describe the type of person he had found in America. In his *Letters From an American Farmer*, he made it plain that the most impressive thing about the American was that he was a new man. He was different from the European. "What then is the American, this new man?" Crèvecoeur asked. "He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. . . . The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas and form new opinions."<sup>1</sup>

This newness which Crèvecoeur noted has been commented upon by a long list of other observers. From the outset there was felt to be a difference between the European and the American. What was this basic difference? Perhaps the most important feature of it was that the European, facing the future, tended to be apprehensive, the American to be confident.

If, however, a contemporary Crèvecoeur were to come, he would be struck, I believe, by a great change that has come over the American in the past few decades. The change, which is still in process of taking place, is in the direction of making the American more aware of the European outlook. The American today is far less brash, less truculent, less confident as he faces the future. He is, in truth, a "new" American.

What has been happening is that the American, who has been sheltered for so many years of his experience from the trials which were part of the European's daily existence, has suddenly been forced to confront these same testings. In 1920 Santayana said of him that the American

. . . has never yet had to face the trials of Job. Great crises, like the Civil War, he has known how to surmount victoriously; and now that he has surmounted a second great crisis victoriously, it is possible that he may relapse, as he did in the other case, into

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<sup>1</sup> de Crèvecoeur, J. Hector St. Jean, *Letters from an American Farmer*. E. P. Dutton Co., 1912, pp. 39, 47.

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an apparently complete absorption in material enterprise and prosperity. But if serious and irremediable tribulation ever overtook him, what would his attitude be? <sup>2</sup>

Actually, it was quite some time before the American was brought face to face with the "serious and irremediable tribulation" of Santayana's question. For quite a long stretch of his life, the full impact of adversity passed the American by. Even after World War I the fortunate citizen of this country relapsed into an all-engrossing preoccupation with material prosperity. But the last few decades, especially the experience of World War II and the tense reality of the present cold war, have brought the American to the place where he knows what tribulation really is. From this experience the "new" American is emerging, and we are gradually gaining an answer to the question Santayana posed.

This is, I believe, an important development for the church and for preachers. This "new" American is the man to whom the gospel must be preached. That preaching can be effective only if it is based upon two things. There must be, first, a clear grasp of the essentials of the Christian faith. There must be, secondly, an understanding of the real needs of the man to whom we preach. These two things must then be fused. To understand the Christian faith without understanding the contemporary soul is to be irrelevant. To understand the contemporary soul and its needs without being aware of the resources of Christian faith is to be reduced to impotence. The union of the two—the understanding of the needs of the soul with the knowledge of the resources of faith—makes possible redemptive preaching.

If this kind of preaching is to be done in our day, it means that preachers must understand something of the spiritual pilgrimage of the American. The road he has traveled over must become a well-known way to the preacher. Indeed, the preacher must walk that same road, share those same experiences. It is that pilgrimage which we, in limited fashion, seek to make in this essay.

## I

This pilgrimage of understanding must begin with the importance of the closing of the frontier. As an actual physical fact, the frontier ceased to exist around 1890. Frederick Jackson Turner quoted the 1890 report of the Superintendent of the Census: "Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to

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<sup>2</sup> Santayana, George, *Character and Opinion in the United States*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, pp. 187-88.

be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports."<sup>3</sup> But if the frontier ceased to exist around that date, it remained true for some time that the west beckoned to those discontented with their lot or discouraged with their prospects. Land was still available for the adventurous spirit.

The course of American development, both individual and national, can hardly be explained without taking into account the effect of the frontier. In sweeping terms, Turner says, "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development."<sup>4</sup> If there had been no frontier, the American would have been a great deal more like his European brother.

It is important to realize, in the course of this spiritual pilgrimage, that there was another frontier in existence for many years after the physical frontier had disappeared. Walter Prescott Webb has called this "the Great Frontier," and claims that it existed from 1500 to the very recent past. This was the period of world history which witnessed the greatest boom of all time. New lands were opened up. New deposits of precious metals were discovered. There was a proper ratio between the size of the population and the amount of land available. This was our situation until about 1930; and in days to come "scholars will look back on the age when the Golden Door opened, and men marched out to the Great Frontier to create the greatest boom that the world has known; and they will make myths and legends about it, and in poetry and literature express their poignant longing for New Frontiers."<sup>5</sup>

To a large extent, the self-confidence of the American is a product of the frontier experience. Subduing a continent, creating farms in the wilderness, conquering the mountains which stood in the way, by sheer might bending a recalcitrant Nature to human will—these things have helped to create in the American a confidence (some would say a cocksureness) that man can do what he wants to do. It may take a little while; a forest is not cleared in a day. But in time and with effort the task could be completed. The men who moved the frontier ever westward passed on to their children this confidence. "We came across, right over the Rockies, and it wasn't easy; but we did it." The implication was quite clear: if we did that in our day, there is nothing you can't do in your day!

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Turner, F. J., *The Frontier in American History*. Henry Holt and Company, 1920, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Webb, W. P., *The Great Frontier*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952, pp. 27-28.

The frontier also helped to make the American an optimist. For a long time, the American never had to face failure as a final reality from which there was no way of escape. If he could not make a success of life in one place, he could always "head West." Failure was never final; there was always, because of the frontier, another chance. The future could look fairly inviting to men who did not have to face the possibility of being finally defeated. When tough circumstances are only temporary, they can be endured; and this outlook has had its important place in making the American the most optimistic of all men.

But this frontier, the physical frontier of our own national experience and "the great frontier" of an expanding age, has passed. The psychological result of its passing is just now beginning to catch up with the American. He has come to realize that he does not any longer live in a society which guarantees another chance. He may, like his grandfather, "head West," but he does not head toward abundant free land and an open future. In all likelihood, he heads toward a job not entirely different from the one in which he may have failed. It is quite a different outlook indeed.

The difficulty for the modern American is complicated by the very success of his predecessors. For so many years American history was the gradual unfolding of a success story without parallel among nations. The American of today has, as a result, been nurtured on stories of American triumphs—a long series of major successes. The winning of independence, the growth of the nation, the thrilling saga of the Westward expansion, the gradual filling in of the vast area of our national boundaries, the preservation of the Union in the Civil War, the successful defeat of German aggression in World War I—these and countless others are the stuff of which American history has been made. It is not strange that men and women who have heard these stories should have become optimistic about the future. If all this had been achieved in the past, was it not a wonderful omen for the future?

This steady stream of triumphs, however, could not go on indefinitely. Signs indicate that they have come to an end. We have entered a new era as a people, and the problems we now confront do not yield as readily to solution. The American today, examining our national experience, finds it difficult to point to any imposing successes. He begins to feel a bit guilty about it, especially when he contrasts it with the virtually unbroken chain of triumphs enjoyed during the days of the frontier. Perhaps the current American mania for discovering a scapegoat finds its source in this contrast



between the triumphs of the past and the setbacks of the present. At any rate, the American of today is no longer the unquestioning optimist he once was.

There is something more than a little pathetic about the optimist who must witness the end of the triumphs upon which his optimism was based. He is a bewildered and baffled figure. Finding it so hard to come to terms with the end of triumph and having no way by which to make the possibility of failure part of his outlook on life, he is driven to one of two courses. He may refuse to concede the fact of defeat, seeking refuge in a sentimental refusal to face reality. This is the path so often taken by the liberal to whom the fact of Progress has been the inspiration for all his efforts. If he once denied its reality, he would be lost. Anything, he feels, is better than to have one's props knocked out from under him. Hence the refusal to face reality, and the stubborn insistence that, in America at least, "progress is our most important product."

But there is a second response the American may make to the passing of the frontier. He may accept so completely the fact of failure that he becomes cynical about all human effort. He then is ripe to demonstrate either a fatalistic indifference to affairs or a callous determination to get what he can and let the devil take the hindmost. These are, of course, the reactions at the extremes. Somewhere within these two extremes, I believe, the contemporary American will be found.

No matter where you locate him within the extremes, you will find this "new" American a little chastened and not so confidently an optimist. An illustration of the change in the outlook of the American is found in the testimony of an eighty-year-old Californian before the State Unemployment Commission during the depression of the thirties. This man had lost his job as a machinist in the depression of 1873, but at that time the West was open to homesteaders and he began again. Since railroads were being built, he was hired as a section hand, then went on to prosperity in the grocery business. The panic of 1893 ruined him once more, but again it was homesteading which brought him back. But the depression of the thirties hit him again; and this time, he was sure, there was no way of recovery. He concluded his story before the Commission by saying: "Years ago Horace Greeley made a statement, 'Young man, go West and grow up with the country.' Were he living today, he would make the statement, 'Go West, young man, and drown yourself in the Pacific Ocean.'"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Goldman, Eric F., *Rendezvous With Destiny*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1952, p. 322.

The preacher's spiritual pilgrimage must begin, then, with this fact of the passing of the frontier, and the effect this has had in turning the man in the pew from sanguine optimism to quizzical questioning ("What's gone wrong?") or to bleak despair ("We've had it").

## II

There is another feature of modern experience which has had a share in the making of the "new" American. He has been thrust into a position of world responsibility and world leadership and has been compelled to come to grips with the rough problems of international affairs. Few Americans sought this: many tried with grim determination to escape it. But the accident of America's favored position, combined with the technological advances of our era, forced the American to shoulder his share of concern for the whole world.

History does not permit the fixing of precise dates for changes in the thinking and outlook of a people; but the emergence of America to a role in world affairs began around 1898. Even after that date, of course, there were many who continued to cherish the dream of isolationism—a happy, carefree, prosperous America protected from the folly of the rest of mankind by two mighty oceans. But now that dream is completely shattered, broken to pieces by the storms of our era. With no adequate preparation, the American has had to come to grips with the tough, frustrating problems of politics on a global scale.

It is important to underline the swiftness of this change. It is not only the fact of global responsibility that is important in the American's spiritual odyssey. It is, even more, the almost lightning-like way in which the sense of it has been forced upon him. Only a few short years ago, America was comfortably isolated. Now and then news of an uprising in some distant corner of the world would reach America, but it seemed remote and unimportant. America was like a man who once in a while must leave a comfortable home, with a fire blazing merrily in the hearth, to go out to rescue someone caught in the storm. But he returned soon to the warmth of the home, confident that he would not have to go out again for some time. Now, to continue the figure, the "new" American realizes that he must *live* constantly in the storm. This is a tremendous change indeed.

And this new situation has brought demands for which the American is by no means fully equipped. Our special difficulty arises because the new qualities demanded are not the type for which our previous experience was

a preparation. The dilemma of the American is that our past experience as a nation developed in us qualities which make it hard for us to fill our present responsibilities.

No matter how difficult our present position may be, there is no escape. The American wanted his nation to grow, to expand, to be important in the eyes of the world. As a result of a combination of hard work and a greatly favored position, the growth and expansion took place. America became a world power. And that power could not be given away. Once it had been developed, it was a fact—a hard, inescapable fact. In the case of America the usual law operated; power imposed responsibility. And while he might exult in the power, the American was less than happy about the responsibility. But the troublesome aspect was that his *feelings* really didn't matter at all. He was caught.

And being caught, he is being forced to see the necessity for coming to grips with aspects of human experience which he had previously been able to escape. For one thing, the American has had to face up in candid fashion to the inevitable place of power in the affairs of nations. This was an especially hard fact of life to face and accept.

The American has never liked to admit the necessity of power politics. A tender-minded approach to life has led him to prefer to believe that consent and agreement were all that were needed to guide the affairs of the nations. The idea of a balance of power was abhorrent, for it seemed to the American that this was the source of Europe's troubles. Far better, he felt, to seek to get rid of power politics, to substitute for the intricate balances a rule of law to which all nations must agree. Our course following World War I was designed to accomplish this purpose.

The result of our laudable but unrealistic aim is well described by Louis J. Halle.

Having abandoned our isolationist policy in 1917 we undertook to crown our intervention by reforming the old world in our image. . . . Believing that power politics meant war as well as tyranny, we undertook to illegitimize rather than legalize them, to disenfranchise rather than regulate them, to denature power by solemn declarations and pledges to which it would submit, and to disarm the nations. . . . By refusing to accept power as a fact in international relations we ruled out any measures shrewdly designed to regulate it.<sup>7</sup>

It has taken some time for the American of today to adjust to this new fact of life; the adjustment is by no means complete. Power is a fact of all

<sup>7</sup> Halle, L. J., *Civilization and Foreign Policy*. Harper & Brothers, 1955, p. 49.

political life and the American has had to adjust himself to it. One result of this adjustment is the loss of the superficial approach which assumed that in a world of national rivalries one could dispense with the element of force and power.

This task of confronting world affairs has led the American to see how problems persist. In international affairs, you never reach a point of solution. There is never a time when it is possible to sit back and feel that the task has been completed. Peace is never permanently won; it is always in the process of being maintained. And in that process it is soon apparent that problems persist in a stubborn manner which seems quite oblivious to our hopes, dreams, expectations. The aim to which we devote ourselves is not "Peace in our time"; it is peace for today—and a prayer for tomorrow.

Such an approach, of course, goes directly against the grain of the American outlook. Impatiently, we want to get a problem solved and thus enable ourselves to move on to the next one. But we are slowly coming to the realization that there is simply no such solution possible. As Charles Burton Marshall puts it, "One of the persistent characteristics of the American approach to the problems of world relations . . . has been the notion of the existence of a philosopher's stone in world affairs—an achievable perfect formula capable of solving all the problems and removing all the hazards."<sup>8</sup> The fact that there is no such magical way of proceeding in the conduct of international relations has come home to the contemporary American. Gradually the idea is becoming accepted by him, but not easily and quickly, for it means that psychologically he must prepare himself for a long siege of anxiety and uncertainty.

It is this which perhaps makes the American today so touchy and so sensitive to any criticism of his nation. We have discovered that we have power but we are not omnipotent. We must take into account the feelings and the attitudes of many other nations, both those who are opposed to us and those who are allied with us. Unilateral action in our kind of a world is impossible. We can't "go it alone." Our allies are quite indispensable for the success of our policy. Before any action can be taken, therefore, the American must reckon with the response to the contemplated action on the part of many other nations. He finds this a disturbing necessity. Once the right course has been found (as the American sees it), he would like to go ahead; but he finds that he must gain the consent of other nations, and this process of gaining consent is often a lengthy and sometimes an aggravating

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, C. B., *The Limits of Foreign Policy*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1954, p. 109.

affair. Many things have been speeded up by modern life, but the machinery of consent among nations still moves at its own slow pace.

In the course of winning consent, the American has been shocked to find that his nation is not universally loved and that America's motives are not considered above question. The American, who had a touching if innocent idea of his own purity of motive, is distressed to find that other people around the world have no such conviction. They are quite frank to say so. And this questioning of our motives comes not only from the Communist bloc, which even the American expects, but from nations like India which should, as the American feels, know better. The reaction of the American to this fact of criticism is interesting. He reacts at one time with the cry that these nations reveal their base ingratitude. "Look what we did for them," the American explodes, "and now see how they return our favors!" The idea here, of course, is that you buy good will. At another time, he accuses these nations of having sold out to the Reds. Any adverse criticism must come from selfish motives. Once more, he puts all such criticisms aside in a burst of nationalistic fervor. "My country, right or wrong!"

But all the time the education of the American goes forward. He cannot completely dismiss these questionings of his motives. He is driven to face the possibility that even in America there may be sin on every level of human experience. This realization has gone into the making of the "new" American.

Most of all, this new involvement in world affairs has confronted the American with the necessity for developing patience. Any observer can see that this is hardly a conspicuous American trait. Our entire experience as a people has made us impatient. What took other nations many centuries to accomplish, we did almost overnight. Consequently, the American has been always impatient. But the problems we now face will be with us for a long time and must be approached day by day. No quick solution is likely.

It is this experience, as it continues, which is going to make the American aware of the tragedy and frustration which have been part of the experience of all other peoples. As he becomes increasingly aware of these aspects of human existence, he is going to be changed. The preacher today must strive to frame a message to meet the real needs of the "new" American.

### III

Thus far we have looked at the "new" American who is emerging out of the changed conditions of both national experience and international ten-

sions. The third factor entering into the making of the "new" American is perhaps the most important. It is an internal factor which has come about by the operation of external events. It is the changed estimate of human nature. From a generally hopeful view of human nature to a somber estimate is the path we have traveled.

It is not necessary, I am sure, to spend much time in indicating the general approach to human nature which characterized us a short time ago. Man was a creature who, by the beneficent influences of science and education, would slowly but surely emerge into an ordering of affairs which, if not exactly Utopia, would not be far from it. The very idea of sin was treated as the quaint outlook of benighted folk. Even in the church this emphasis was preserved more as a link to the past than a description of the present. The liturgy might draw from the worshiper an acknowledgment of sin, but life glossed over the whole idea. In fact, man was considered quite a remarkable creature. The suggestion that there was something wrong, some evil present in his nature which neither science nor education could overcome, was a sentiment regarded with amused tolerance by a confident world. The words which for centuries had been part of the vocabulary of the believer—sin, redemption, atonement—were relegated to the limbo of discarded ideas. In their place, we used words like maladjustment, progress, self-realization. The dark side of human nature we ignored, and hoped that what we ignored would soon be gone.

But it did not go. It is an ironical comment that an age which had the greatest expectations of what the free man would achieve is the witness to the terrible bondage in which man has placed himself. The truth is that our blissful optimism about man made us extremely faulty observers of the human scene. We were totally unprepared, spiritually, for the rise of the monstrous crudities and awful barbarities of Fascism, Nazism, and Communism. Our own ideas of sweetness and light blinded us to the dark realities of human nature. We had forgotten that all men are sinners, and hence could not persuade ourselves that there could be any truth in the stories coming out of Europe about the massacres of Jews. Our outlook said that man no longer did such things. And if the facts did not square with the outlook, so much the worse for the facts. They must be wrong; ah, of course, it was "propaganda."

An illustration of this outlook is found in a comment by Louis Jaffe about Louis D. Brandeis. Speaking of Brandeis and his serene good will, Jaffe said: "He moved with such assurance in the realms of light that



darkness had ceased for him to be a living reality. The demonic depths and vast violence of men's souls were part of the historical past rather than the smouldering basis of the present. . . . Nothing in his system prepared Brandeis for Hitler."<sup>9</sup>

But if we were unprepared for a time, our awakening was rough and thorough. The "new" American is a person who has had to go through the harrowing experience of admitting that his ideas were immature, the product more of his wishes than of his experience. He has had to grow up suddenly and to face the truth about human nature. That truth, which can no longer be hidden, is that the evil in man is endemic and he is a sinner, that he is by no means only a creature of sweetness and light. He is a mixture—a strange baffling mixture compounded of elements of greatness and wretchedness, of sin and saintliness, of good and evil.

The path by which the "new" American has arrived at this estimate of his nature is a long one. But it is clear that World War II and the atrocities of the totalitarian regimes have been significant events. These revelations struck the American with tremendous force. At first he tried to escape their impact by denying their reality. But the evidence mounted until he could no longer hide from it. This was man—man as produced not by primitivism but by an educational system which was the model for the world. This was man—the proud Western man, the supposed heir of the ages who would lead his fellows to heights never before reached by man. This was man—man seen in the grisly light of Dachau and Buchenwald. Something important had been left out of our calculations. We had missed an element of human nature which was of great consequence. But we could miss it no longer.

The "new" American to whom we preach is a person formed out of such experiences: the dawn of a closed society, a world of national rivalries in which no final solutions are possible, a realization that human nature, in Alexander Miller's phrase, needs "not a resolve but a rescue."<sup>10</sup>

#### IV

This, then, is the "new" American to whom the gospel is to be preached. It has been our effort in this paper to set out briefly some of the forces which have gone into the making of this man who sits in the pews of the churches on Sunday mornings. This pilgrimage of understanding is a preparation for preaching; it is the background against which the Good

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., *The Vital Center*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949, pp. 162-3.

<sup>10</sup> Miller, A., *The Renewal of Man*. Doubleday & Co., 1955, p. 38.



News must be set. Only as we understand this "new" American will preaching be relevant to his felt needs.

Obviously, there are many other factors—industrialization and the impact of science, for example—which have had a very important share in the making of this "new" American. But the forces considered in this essay have been especially powerful influences upon the American. The preacher who would present the claims of the gospel to the modern American must take account of these forces.

To face these forces himself is the price the preacher must pay, if he is effectively to present the gospel to his contemporaries.

Nothing does more to widen the gulf between the Church and the people outside [observes David H. C. Read] than the withdrawal of Christians into the sanctuary where they can admire the colours of the stained-glass windows when they ought to be outside examining the dust that has blown upon them from the traffic of the great by-pass road. This is not a time to be exchanging glances of pious understanding in ecclesiastical corners, but to be out in the open exposed to all the winds that blow and trying the impossible of knowing whence they come and whither they go.<sup>11</sup>

The preacher who accepts this discipline of identification will be able to present the gospel to the "new" American.

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<sup>11</sup> Read, D. H. C., *The Communication of the Gospel*. S.C.M. Press, 1952, p. 29.

# Communicating as Christians

MALCOLM BOYD

CHRISTIANS IN MANY LANDS are earnestly seeking to find new ways to communicate, in a clear and faithful and effective way, the gospel of Jesus Christ to non-Christians and to merely nominal Christians. This effort has produced a number of striking experiments in Christian communication.

I observed a number of these experiments in communication at first-hand while studying for more than a year in England and Europe. Some of the experiments, such as the *Kirchentag* in Germany, the Iona Community in Scotland, and the Zoe Movement in Greece, have attracted international attention. Certainly, the activity of the priest-workers and the pastor-workers in France has been widely publicized and discussed. The "house-church" movement in England is now increasingly arresting the attention of theologians and pastors in the United States. Out-and-out imitation of these and other experiments is surely not to be sought. However, their stimulus, fervor, studied program of activity, and evangelical imperative must command our serious consideration. We shall look at several lesser-known Christian experiments which are trying to find "point of contact" for the gospel with persons and institutions encompassing persons.

## I

Christian efforts to communicate the gospel more effectively naturally extend to the field of the mass media. For some, this has meant producing films with explicit religious and Christian themes. For others, including Henri de Tienda in Paris, it has meant delving into the area of offering Christian theological interpretation of secular films. I attended, one night in Montmartre, a discussion led by M. de Tienda concerning the theological

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THE REV. MALCOLM BOYD, B.D., S.T.M., was formerly a television producer, radio producer and writer, and movie public relations man, in Hollywood and New York. Since he turned to theological studies, he has studied and traveled both here and in Europe, and lectured at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey on the mass media. His book, *Crisis in Communication: A Christian Examination of the Mass Media*, is to be published by Doubleday & Co. in February, 1957. He is a Tutor Assistant on the faculty of the Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

significance of the film, *Crime and Punishment*. We met in an old, unheated hall, and men and women had come in off the street to sit in on, and take part in, the frequently lively discussion.

Some Christians have used television and radio in their evangelical work, and others have made use of the medium of the press. Notable among efforts in the latter category is the Dutch Christian publication, *The Open Door*, and *Church Illustrated* in England. One conspicuously successful Christian effort has been in the comics field.

Fleet Street, London's "Newspaper Row," had its biggest shock in years when the Rev. Marcus Morris left his parish in an English village to become a comic book editor. It was an even bigger shock when Mr. Morris zoomed past all competition to establish Britain's top circulation in his highly competitive field. Perhaps his work has an important lesson for parents, teachers, and clergy in America to study and inwardly digest. The lesson is not confined to comic books. It also concerns children's programs on TV, those action-packed, often violent shows which consume more and more time in the life of an average child.

Controversially, Mr. Morris allows that action material is *good* for children. He quotes Chesterton's praise of honest blood-and-thunder literature as being "as simple as the thunder of heaven and the blood of man." Children living in our highly mechanized age are out of touch with basic reality, says Mr. Morris. What is basic reality? "The sea and rivers and the countryside . . . the simple things which a child needs to express his sense of adventure." And so children want robust and exciting material, in films, on TV, and in comic books, he avers. "If they are not given it, they will simply look for it elsewhere. All too often we offer children namby-pamby, emasculated material. Actually, there is a considerable danger of well-meaning people who know nothing about children attacking material simply because it contains violence. What *is* wrong with some comics and TV and films is not that they contain violence, but that they contain *only* violence, and also sadism."

Mr. Morris feels that the really vital point to be considered is the *attitude toward life* of the TV, magazine, and film makers. "It is a wrong thing for a child to glory in being violent. It is wrong that he should be given macabre and bestial material. However, sooner or later children must come to terms with life, and there is violence in life," he explains. "If we try to protect a child from that we are doing him a disservice. Why try to say that the world contains only good people doing the right thing?"

The answer, he believed, was to produce comic books for children which are Christian in their basic approach. His work might serve as a good object lesson for many TV programming and production leaders today who are in charge of children's shows, as well as for vitally concerned parents and instructors.

Mr. Morris, a young, overworked, tired-looking man who spurns the clerical collar in his Fleet Street office, explains *how* his material for children is Christian, even when it is not dealing with an out-and-out Christian theme or personality.

Of course, let it be said first that a goodly portion of his comics do deal with Christian themes and personalities. In this category of his work, Mr. Morris is convinced that children are not so much affected by being preached at as they are by seeing Christianity at work. He devotes a part of his comics to showing Christianity in action. *Eagle* (the comic book for boys from ten to fourteen years old) not long ago ran forty episodes on the life of St. Mark, commencing with his boyhood and extending the narrative through the event of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The story, prepared by the Rev. Chad Varah, a London vicar, ended with the missionary journeys of St. Mark.

*Girl* (the comic book for ten- to fourteen-year-old girls) almost always tells the story of a great Christian woman. One series of episodes was about Mary Slessor of Calabar, the missionary to South America. Twenty-six weeks of episodes concerned Miriam, the sister of Moses, about whom there are only fourteen references in the Old Testament. The series in *Girl* was really the story of Moses as seen from the point of view of his sister, and written to catch the interest of young girl readers. *Robin* (a comic book for children learning to read) and *Swift* (for younger brothers) tell Bible stories quite simply, not really in strip form, but combining pictures with texts.

The *Observer*, a distinguished British newspaper, described the Rev. Marcus Morris' comic books as being "of a new type, stream-lined, brightly-colored, strip-illustrated, atom-conscious but salutary in tone." What is really most interesting and valuable about Mr. Morris' material for children, however, is the *implicit* Christian approach undergirding the entire effort.

This Christian approach reveals itself in Mr. Morris' attitude toward the "hero." His attitude is equally valuable whether one is considering the "hero" of a TV Western series or the "hero" of a Marcus Morris comic

book. "Children identify themselves with the hero," he explains. "In comics which are harmful for children the hero almost always wins the day either by brute force, or perhaps because he has some magical device which enables him to perform an action which is in fact superhuman. It is a very dangerous thing to suggest to children that there is an easy way out of life, to lead them into the 'fantasy of omnipotence.' The next step is for the child, or adult, to say: 'If only I had a magical device, I could . . .'"

Dan Dare, a "hero" type of character in *Eagle*, wins the day as a hero must. However, he achieves this through the use of his own abilities and talents. Dan Dare exemplifies courage, common sense, and perseverance. None of the modern devices he uses is "miraculous."

A Christian social attitude is implicit in Mr. Morris' comic strips. "Does a strip succeed in showing a child that the way to get ahead in life is to co-operate with others, or to trample down other persons?" he asks. The question is equally pertinent for plots on TV and motion-picture screens. Many dramatic materials for children today teach them to get ahead by cleverly "doing in" others. Mr. Morris teaches co-operation.

The racial problem is a global one. In regard to the general problem of attitude toward other races, Mr. Morris tries to avoid being strained or overly obvious. "Goodness or badness is never a national or racial characteristic," he maintains, and illustrates this in his comic books.

How did the Rev. Marcus Morris become a leading editor of Fleet Street? How did one of the most unusual enterprises in journalistic history come about?

It was after the war, and Mr. Morris, in his small English parish, started a modest parish magazine. As he worked away on it, he became increasingly convinced that the Christian faith needs to be conveyed to people in a popular way through the printed word. Money was required for improving his four-page church sheet. Working against great odds, and going into considerable debt, Mr. Morris first expanded his paper into a town-wide project, then into a county-wide project. He called the paper *Anvil*. He inveigled some important "name" writers to do pieces for him. He used good illustrations. Then it became tragically obvious that *Anvil* could not succeed on a limited, county-wide basis. Mr. Morris went into further personal debt, circularizing clergy nationally and asking for their support for his paper. But an impasse was reached when the parson-editor realized that advertising would be necessary if a newsstand and bookstall demand for *Anvil* were to be created. There was no money for advertising.

For the British *Sunday Dispatch* Mr. Morris wrote an article entitled "Comics Bring Horror Into the Nursery." The London *Daily Mirror* then ran a headline: "Parson to Start Religious Comics." Mr. Morris received hundreds of letters praising his intention but offering no specific help.

The idea of *Eagle* had by now developed in Mr. Morris' mind. For nine months he worked on the original dummy of *Eagle* (which, along with his other books, now has a circulation of more than two million copies).

That summer—it was 1949—Mr. Morris journeyed from his parish to London by train every week. He besieged publishers' offices, trying to find someone who would make possible his ambitious plan. Throughout this difficult period he was still carrying the full load of his parish duties. When he was just about ready to give up in discouragement, Mr. Morris received word in September that the powerful, established Hulton Press of London was interested. The interest developed into practical action. Mr. Morris was invited to join Hulton Press as editor of the future magazine, *Eagle*. He produced four trial issues while still commuting to his church in Lancashire. In April, 1950, *Eagle* appeared on Fleet Street. In June, Mr. Morris resigned his parish to devote full-time to his editorial duties. He was named Honorary Chaplain of St. Bride's Church on Fleet Street. He has, also, been increasingly occupied as a guest lecturer before school groups and church groups and such organizations as Rotary Clubs and P.T.A.'s.

His editorial duties have increased, too. Just recently he assumed the editorship for Hulton Press of another publication, called *House Wife*. This mass-circulation women's periodical is not explicitly Christian at all—and this is why Mr. Morris is editing it, and why he consistently endeavors to present Christian values in articles on such themes as marriage and child care. One December he featured an article written by a Christian on the topic, "The Meaning of Christmas."

Organized in conjunction with each comic book is a club which comprises children of that paper's age group. The *Eagle* club now has about 100,000 active members. Outings are organized for club members along regional and local lines. Youth hostel trips are run by *Eagle* and *Girl*, tying in with the Youth Hostel Association. Cricket coaching and football coaching are organized for *Eagle* readers.

At Christmas each year a series of carol services is arranged by Mr. Morris for readers of the comic books. These services are held in several British cathedrals, commencing at historic St. Paul's in London. There were 9,000 applications to attend the St. Paul's service last Christmas. The



cathedral could accommodate only 4,000. Services were also held, with Mr. Morris preaching a short sermon at each one, in Edinburgh, Belfast, Manchester, Bristol, Portsmouth, Birmingham, and Cardiff.

*Eagle* and *Girl* award badges each week and each month for acts of heroism or public service by boys and girls. Representatives of the comic books are sent to interview children and their families, and standards are held very high. The "Eagle of the Year" receives a two-week holiday for himself and his family. Unselfishness is one of the most important qualities sought in making these awards.

Mr. Morris believes that his function is not to present in a direct way the doctrines of the Christian faith, but rather to relate Christian values to ordinary living. In our mass media, technicized age, when television and other forces are prime educative instruments in the lives of children (as well as of adults), it is possible that the Rev. Marcus Morris has pioneered an approach which others may follow. This is not meant in the sense of clergymen leaving their pulpits to produce or direct TV shows for children, or to make films, or to edit children's magazines. It is, however, meant in the sense that parents, instructors, and clergymen alike may catch a vision of what Mr. Morris has tried to achieve. We must look for, it would seem—and ask for—underlying, implicit Christian values in the children's entertainment which is doing far more than entertaining them. Such entertainment is molding thought and action patterns for life. We must ask ourselves—and the producers and editors—such questions as the following:

Is the "hero" using his abilities and exercising courage, common sense, and perseverance to get ahead in the world, or is he winning by brute force or by the use of "miracles"?

Is the plot of a given children's drama, be it a TV Western or a magazine article, teaching how one may get ahead by cleverly knifing somebody else in the back—or is it teaching a Christian social attitude?

Is goodness or badness being identified with a national or racial characteristic?

Is a given program, or plot, or film, or magazine, *incompatible* with a Christian view of life? Or, is it, while entertaining our children, also showing them how to live poised, useful, unselfish lives in a world which is desperately crying out for such lives?

The country parson turned Fleet Street editor has cast some needed light our way, as we grapple with crucial questions concerning the education of tomorrow's Christian adults.



## II

Little publicized in the United States is the activity of St. Catharine's, at Cumberland Lodge not far from London. It was established for the specific purpose of offering to teachers and students in the universities opportunities to overcome some serious present-day limitations. Because of the immense overgrowth of specialization, it has been noted that students and professors tend to be immersed in the routine of their immediate degree subject, and all wider issues are crowded out. Many modern universities are nonresidential and have little corporate life. Further, only a small proportion of students have been brought up in homes where there are assured moral or religious convictions.

In the past such limitations were not pressing problems. "It was the recognized function of the universities to train an elite for leadership in the professions and public life," it is explained in a statement issued by St. Catharine's. "This was done, partly by giving students a wide background and imbuing them with the traditional values of European culture and partly by the stimulating influence of their corporate life." Today, St. Catharine's seeks to bring together scholars for short periods "to examine the fundamental assumptions and implications of their own studies and also to explore the nature of man and society and the Christian interpretation of life in relation to the various secular alternatives." In addition to week-end conferences, reading parties are organized during vacation periods of the colleges in Great Britain when faculties, students, and a few graduates come into residence at Cumberland Lodge for particular periods of time.

Here, the concept of evangelism and genuine missionary activity within society-at-home is recognized. It is perceived that "point of contact" is not merely a problem of foreign missionaries. Finding "point of contact" with workers and intellectuals has been stressed by study groups of the World Council of Churches as being a major need of the churches. At St. Catharine's, "point of contact" is indeed sought with intellectuals, but in a somewhat unorthodox, always restrained way. When I visited there for a week-end conference, there was no grace offered before meals by anyone. A small chapel in Cumberland Lodge was available at any time for personal devotions, but little attention was called to it, and it was not much used by the persons present on that particular week end. Many were members of an organization called "The Skeptics' Club" of London University, and a more traditional evangelism had failed to establish relationship with them.

"The Motives of Science" was under discussion by some twenty physi-

cists attending the week-end conference. The lodge is a sprawling, immense building given as a "Grace and Favour" residence to St. Catharine's in 1947 by King George VI and the present Queen Mother Elizabeth. Guests are housed upstairs where the small chapel for private devotional use is also located. Persons visiting the lodge may attend regular services of the Church of England at the Chapel Royal, a short walk away from the lodge and adjoining the nearby residence of Queen Mother Elizabeth, in Windsor Great Park. I sat in on the discussion with the physicists, who belonged to the Maxwell Society of the Physics Department at Kings College, London.

Relating to the topic, "The Motives of Science," such questions as the following were raised in the discussion. "Has our drive to aid man only led him to greater danger?" "What is the *reason* for helping one's neighbor? Can this reason be found *within the language system of science* or only in the language systems of morality, philosophy and religion?"

The physicists' subtopics in discussion over the week end followed this order: (a) What have been the motives of scientists in the past? (b) The desire for power . . . over the environment and our fellow men? Over our own expectations (prediction)? (c) The desire for truth? (d) Prediction versus understanding: the itch to know how and why; in what sense is this a desire for truth? (e) The desire to help our fellow men? This last point involves the responsibility of scientists in the community, in terms of medical research and, quite pointedly in our time, in terms of scientific warfare.

At the summing-up session, the question of the scientist's responsibility proved to be most controversial and a deeply disturbing issue. Most physicists present were not Christians. A spokesman of the Christian point of view was Dr. Donald M. Mackay of the Physics Department at Kings College, one of the three lecturers participating in the week-end discussion.

*These vital questions came to the surface during the summing-up:* "Are we in a new age . . . differing in fundamental respects from previous ages?" "We have brought into existence things which give us the ability to control men's minds; where are these things leading us?" "There occur unforeseen results of our work. What are the scientist's duties in regard to responsibilities growing out of this fact?"

The following books were cited as having a useful bearing on the topics discussed by the physicists: Bronowski, *The Common Sense of Science*; Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution*; Burt, *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*; Forster, *The Machine Breaks Down*; Oppenheimer,

*Reith Lectures*, 1953; Orwell, 1984; Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*.

### III

The Christian Frontier Council is comprised of some forty men and women prominent in varied circles of activity. An evening meeting, about once a month, is held in London. Each year an annual conference is held over a long week end. Specialist groups have been formed to work intensively and continuously on selected projects. A quarterly publication, *Christian News-Letter*, is issued as the council's organ. The publication of books under the council's auspices is another function. *The Crisis in the University* (written by Sir Walter Moberly, who was my host at St. Catharine's) comes in this category; so does *The Doctor's Profession*, an inquiry into medical problems and the fruit of discussion by a Frontier group of doctors. National journals and periodicals, too, feel the impact of the thinking of Frontier members. The Rev. Dr. Alec Vidler is an officer of the council.

What is the Christian frontier?

"By the frontier idea," it is explained, "is meant recognition of the fact that there is a frontier between theology (in the sense of Christian dogma) and the multifarious spheres in which men have to act, or between the Church as an ecclesiastical institution and the tasks in which Christians have to obey God without direct ecclesiastical guidance. The perception that this frontier area exists and that it must be explored by fresh methods is sufficiently new to warrant the invention of this new name."

One sphere of the council's work is in the field of education, where, as in other spheres of life, men are called to glorify and obey God and to serve their neighbors. A Christian movement among university teachers in Great Britain goes by the name of the Don's Advisory Group. It is supported jointly by the Christian Frontier Council and the Student Christian Movement. Describing this activity, Michael B. Foster, an Oxford don and council officer, wrote: "Characteristic of the British movement is a fear of exclusiveness, of anything which might make the group of Christian dons in a university a self-sufficient religious coterie. There is a dominating desire to keep the 'frontier' open, and to bring in colleagues who are on the fringe or beyond it. It accepts the principles laid down in Sir Walter Moberly's book, that the task of the Christian in the university is not to exploit the university for purposes which are not its own (even when these are Christian purposes) but to help the university 'to be the university.'"

I found particularly impressive the council's description of its aims and work. The attendance at its monthly meetings is kept small, as "there cannot be effective interchange of thought in a large gathering. The most immediate result of such discussion is in the minds of those who take part in it." Again: "The Council does not seek to advertise itself, or to make claims which it is not in a position to fulfill. It may be described as an experiment in the possibilities of friendship, in which, through free intercourse, minds stimulate, quicken and enrich one another."

#### IV

Another communications center in England which is pioneering new Christian frontier work is St. Anne's House, in the Soho section of London. The Rev. Patrick McLaughlin is director, the Bishop of London is president, Miss Dorothy L. Sayers is chairman of the council, and T. S. Eliot is one of the vice-presidents. St. Anne's House was founded in 1943 when it was opened by Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, then Bishop of London.

St. Anne's House bases its program upon the need for traditional methods and structures to be supplemented by new forms of Christian action. "These require in turn a fresh understanding (in penitence) on the part of Christians of what the Christian Gospel IS in the contemporary situation." It is apparent, St. Anne's House leaders explain,

that the primary need is for the recovery of the prophetic ministry of the Church, recognized and established as an integral part of her operation, alongside the traditional sacramental and pastoral ministries; and for this in turn the outstanding need is for Christians both engaged in ordinary "secular" occupations and trained in a Christian social critique, i.e., in an analysis and interpretation of contemporary history, and particularly of social institutions, which is derived from Biblical revelation. Indeed, only if there is a strong body of Christians both active and intelligent will the Christian Church ever become "incarnate" in the modern world, so that she will illuminate its social complexities and human situations. The Church therefore has an obligation to see that all her members (not just her full-time ministers) are informed, alert, well-directed in this modern world and are therefore certain that they are living in it, not as isolated individuals, but as members of the Communion of Saints, the Mystical Body of Christ.

A feature of the program of St. Anne's House is its Guest Nights. One of these had Miss Sayers and Prof. C. S. Lewis discussing Miss Kathleen Nott's controversial book, *The Emperor's Clothes*. In Miss Nott's absence, due to illness, Mr. G. S. Fraser, who is on the staff of the *Times Literary Supplement* and who talks on the B.B.C. Third Programme in its New Verse series, defended the point of view expounded in her book.

In intellectual, creative approaches we have either the course of direct exploration (as by the scientist or the poet) or the course of the systematic philosopher and the theologian, Mr. Fraser explained in his talk. Both courses begin at the same point, i.e., "Man is a wretched creature . . ."; but the pragmatic, humanistic course continues in this vein: "therefore let him look into the matter and see what he can do about it." He pointed out that people of a liberal mind—who had thought of themselves as vestigially Christians, and who often irritate practicing and phlegmatic Christians very much—regard Christian dogmas as "blinkers" and "shackles." They suspect "a spiritual elite" of playing a little private game, contriving to prove a thesis and letting this process replace the development of life. Mr. Fraser pointed out Miss Nott's criticism in *The Emperor's Clothes* of the false assumption of superiority by many Christian apologists in fields where they are rank amateurs. The conscious working of Christian dogmas into creative works was cited particularly in the plays of T. S. Eliot. This process, present also in the works of such writers as Miss Sayers and Professor Lewis, is criticized by Miss Nott.

Miss Sayers, during her discussion of Miss Nott's book at the St. Anne's House Guest Night, said that there is "nothing more fatal to art" than things written with an edifying purpose. However, she went on: ". . . if a Christian has a great experience . . . then no one has the right to deny him his right to express that experience in his work. . . . One must not bolster up scientific truth by falsifying theological truth."

Eminent artists, philosophers, psychologists, and scientists were enlisted as speakers for a course at St. Anne's House entitled "Image, Meaning and Metaphor." The first part of the course consisted of an analysis of communication through language, in natural science, and also as discernible in prelinguistic communication in the natural world and through extra-sensory perception. The second part of the course is an attempt at a synthesis, with the aim of discovering any conclusions which could be drawn in the light of the first inquiry.

What does the future hold for St. Anne's House?

We see then that our task for the next five or perhaps ten years is to continue primarily as a centre for research into the vexed problem of communications. Some Western thinkers have recently drawn attention to the diminishing value of words, whether written or spoken, and to a corresponding increase in the value of images. This situation seems to demand a thorough and sustained enquiry into its causes and the effects upon Western culture of this change from verbal arguments as the sole medium for exchanging ideas to a preoccupation with images, and these mainly visual.

## V

On the island of Iona, in Athens where I talked with some leaders of the Zoe Movement and other evangelical movements, in Sheffield where I spent a week taking part in the activity of the Industrial Mission there, in Leeds where I observed at firsthand the activity of the "house-church" movement and reflected upon its implications, in Paris where I lived with the Roman Catholic ecumenicists of the Dominican study center *Istina*, at the Chateau de Bossey in Switzerland where I spent three months discussing "point of contact" both theologically and in terms of existing experiments—in none of these "positive witness" situations did I learn quite so much as in some hard "negative witness" situations. Or, perhaps I should say, I learned *how*, in the positive witness situations, to see the negative witness situations in terms of positive witness.

Let me offer an example. I was standing in the great cathedral at York, one of the finest Christian edifices in the world, when I suddenly realized how, for a large number of persons there, it was a museum! This was a post-Christian age, and the cathedral was a monument or museum of major interest in the study of that preceding period (when was it?) of "Christianity." I heard "Jesus Christ" uttered as a swear word by an impatient tourist in that gigantic museum.

I had heard "Jesus Christ" uttered as a swear word under even more unusual circumstances six months earlier. A life of Jesus Christ was being filmed for motion pictures. Hundreds of persons were gathered on the movie set, in Hollywood. The crucifixion was being enacted before the cameras. I stood far back, looking over the heads of the milling crowd toward the three crosses at the other end of the set, and toward the men roped onto the crosses. Surely, this would be the "visual aid" of all time for Christian witness! Suddenly, a technician, pushing to get through the mob in order to do his particular job, swore at another man, "Jesus Christ, get out of my way!"

It is only in terms of the need, the vacuum, the desperate recognition that our symbols (along with our words) have largely lost their meaning for a secularized society, that we may turn the negative witness revealed by them into positive witness of evangelism for Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Until we realize ourselves how serious the *need* for our own commitment (seen in terms of evangelism for others), and for evangelism itself, has become, we seemingly will lack the response and fullhearted prayer for that full commitment.



The cross has largely become an *objet d'art*, reproduced in gold and jewels in full-color pages of the glossiest magazines; even in simple wood design and execution, it generally impresses as art and not as reality underlying, and transcending, art. The nativity has been secularized for commercial purposes connected with Yuletide huckstering. In Europe, I noticed the sharp contrast I felt between fashionable shop window and damp, ill-lighted, simple church building. In each, at Christmas time, could be found a crèche and little images of the shepherds and the Magi and the manger animals. The fashionable shop window had a slick, high-colored, sophisticated design and execution of these ancient figures, while the church building attempts were crude, often without much color, almost primitive. (Of course, the shop window could be *primitive*, but, if so, it was fashionable-primitive, and there is much difference between the two). One approach was not so much an adaptation of a theme as a distortion of a theme; the other approach was faithful to the reality underlying the artistic endeavor which gave it its only purpose.

To establish "point of contact" with non-Christians and with merely nominal, secularized Christians, one can no longer rely upon old symbols. Their distortion, their "enchantment," their own evangelization by secularization, is an accomplished task. One may now attempt to communicate the message of the gospel by means of the cross, for example, and find that one is instead communicating something quite different than what was intended.

We must study the positive approaches to establishing "point of contact" for the gospel; and Europe and England are rich in experiments which contain many lessons for us to learn. However, our endeavor to preach the gospel in this way must be rooted in a firm acquaintance with "negative witness," that is, with the meaninglessness of Christian words and symbols as taken for granted. Must this not even include the "symbol" of "the Christian life"? One may in a very startling way be preaching the opposite of what one intended to be preaching, if the word-and-symbol system is not first correlated with the ability of other persons to comprehend. The Holy Spirit is, of course, the Communicator of communication; yet "point of contact" also exists as a valid phrase describing the efforts of sinful man, aware of his redemption, to communicate with sinful man.

# The Influence of the Religious Press

ROLAND E. WOLSELEY

## I

ONE TIME I WAS SITTING in the office of a senior editor of *Time Magazine* when a member of the army of O.G.'s (as they dub office girls around the tower in Rockefeller Center) delivered some mail. While waiting for a departmental conference to begin and conversing with me, the editor sifted his packet. I could not avoid noticing that when he picked up a prominent religious magazine he pulled it from its envelope, glanced for a second at the titles printed on the cover, and then flipped it over his shoulder into the wastebasket.

Many interpretations of this action are possible. Maybe this editor was a subscriber at home. If so, he would more likely pass the issue on to Time Inc.'s library than discard it, or would give it to another staffer. Or, even more likely, he is so swamped with reading matter (as aren't we all?) he has steeled himself against trying to read everything that comes before him, and with a sad but firm gesture throws away all such tempting treasures as that periodical. Still more likely is this possibility: that he is an incurious non- or anti-religionist. Traditionally, secular journalists have been skeptics; but just as they do not drink as much as they used to nor bounce from job to job as tramp printers used to, so not so many avoid the church as used to.

I have talked to some religious journalists who in their moments of deepest gloom about the value and effectiveness of their work seem ready to believe that most of their readers treat their magazines or papers just about the way the *Time* staff member handled the one sent to him.

The religious editor or journalist feels glum now and then because he works largely in the dark. After all, the manufacturer of motor cars knows they will be ridden in, and often. The producer of food knows it will be eaten. The builder knows his structures will be used, and thoroughly. The maker of clothing is sure it will be worn, and long. But the

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religious journalist, like all journalists in all times, has no certainty that his words or his publication will be read by most of his audience, much less acted upon.

He knows too well all about the turnover of readers, the failures to renew subscriptions, the copies returned as unsold, the letters revealing a total misunderstanding of content (who ever bought a car and proceeded to drive it in reverse from that time on, or bought a suit and wore it inside out?). An editorial nightmare is to dream that all the subscribers have canceled at one time.

There is a brighter side, however. The editor of the periodical that the *Time* senior editor handled so casually probably knows that certain other *Time* editors are by no means so offhand about it. The religious editor's office attends carefully to his magazine and to many others that deal with religion.

Similarly, writers for and editors of religious periodicals soon can find evidence that their work is having effect and exerting influence. The next mail usually brings letters of complaint or praise. Or the door opens and there stands a loyal reader who desires to become acquainted.

*What effect, however, is the religious press having? How much influence is it exerting? How and why?*

At the risk of losing right here what few readers this article may have attracted thus far, I must say that I do not know the answers to these fundamental questions. It is consolation for my own ignorance, if nothing else, to have to add that neither does anyone else know them. Except in isolated instances, in fact, no one knows scientifically the effect and influence of journalism in general, here or abroad, much less of so amorphous a segment as religious journalism.

Observers and students of the press not only lack scientific information but are also full of contradictions in their subjective verdicts. An adverse critic of the press, for instance, points to the fact that in national election after national election, during the Rooseveltian Era, the great majority of daily and weekly newspapers supported opponents of Franklin D. Roosevelt—and lost. But at the same time the identical critic observes that the press is a menace to society by printing so much news of crime and scandal and making the life of wrongdoing appealing. Somehow, the press must be both potent and impotent at once, to satisfy the prejudices of the uncertain sociologists!

This is not to say that there are no broad answers; it is to say that there are no scientific ones that enable an editor to make choices of content guar-

anted to produce given results. The journalist is unlike the motor car manufacturer. He, at least, knows that by inserting certain mechanisms he can produce a vehicle capable of moving at the rate of 120 m.p.h., but not 1,200 m.p.h.

Obviously if a religious magazine or paper that once had 300,000 circulation gradually drops off to 50,000, and all other conditions have remained the same (such as the number of constituents in the denomination, the availability of paper for printing, and the service of the U. S. mail for transporting the publication), it is evident that it is losing markedly in whatever kind of effect and influence it has had.

Such a result, I should like to add, is not necessarily bad. It is simply losing the *kind* of influence it has had. That kind might not be the most desirable, or even desirable at all. Possibly 250,000 readers have been attracted by the most vapid and false of religious doctrine. The change to intellectually more respectable content has had the effect of losing five-sixths of the readers; this result may be all to the good. It harms advertising income and circulation revenue, to be sure, but it also reduces the costs of production. The new philosophy of the publication might be far more penetrating and vigorous in its ultimate effect, as well as less harmful to the souls and spirits of its residue of readers.

The above example is, of course, a simulated one. It has its living exemplars, nevertheless, but in reverse. We all know of religious publications with small circulations, running from 3,000 to 10,000 an issue. Often these must be subsidized. They never hope to become popular newsstand publications because their content makes its appeal only to a group educated either to a specialty, such as religion and psychology, psychiatry, or music. Or the appeal is to the scholar equipped to read articles about religion couched in language beyond the ken of the ordinary layman. The day such periodicals attain huge circulations and genuine readers *en masse* for all copies will arrive only after illiteracy has been banished from the globe, virtually everyone possesses a Ph.D. degree, and someone has devised a method of reading that will enable the print-swamped citizen to keep up with scores of magazines and papers each day—possibly by putting them near his pillow at night, wrapped around a cylinder wired to a gadget on his head that will transfer the content to his brain as he snores.

Drops in circulation, and various other clues that will be referred to later as we come to the testimonies of editors of the day, are all obvious to the journalist and non-journalist alike, except the tool now being used by a few religious publishers: reader-interest surveys. Any unit of the reli-

gious press that has the money for such surveys can obtain a semi-scientific idea of the effect of the publication on its readers; at least of limited effects. By this method, at its best, an interviewer goes to a subscriber and talks to him and members of his family about what is read in the publication. Sometimes he goes as a representative of a given magazine; sometimes he inquires about several publications at once, secular as well as religious. He is thoroughly familiar with the content and, using specific issues, scores precisely what a reader allegedly has read. When all these results are put together, the editor has an idea what interested or did not interest his readers. If he finds that most of them skipped the sententious column by Pastor X or Former Editor Y, he knows that this bit is ineffective. He usually, alas, is not able to dump that column into the trash heap. But where he can make changes, he knows better than other editors, sometimes, where to make them, if mass reader interest is his yardstick of value.

Such surveys show that material is read or is not read. But what is reading? And how well has what was read stuck? Has the reading changed minds? Which way? Editors can only guess, along with the psychologists, that one of several effects may be gained with people exposed, week by week or month by month, to given views, facts, or ideas. So many other factors determine reactions that it is dangerous to count on action along any given line. You can lead a reader to the page but you cannot always make him read, think, and act upon what you have written. This condition is a happy one, in the long run. Suppose such power had been possessed by the Rev. Gerald L. K. Smith, Father Coughlin, and some other religious editors of their type in bygone days? Would it have been offset by that power in the hands of what we might now consider "good" editors? It is the essence of democracy that readers may still reach their own conclusions as to participation in the ideas and urgings to action of religious journalists.

Realizing, then, that there are few certainties, and that maybe they should be few, religious journalists in the United States have made one of these choices:

1. They have selected goals and objectives for their work, with varying degrees of specificity, proceeded to write and edit along lines that seemed to them best to achieve their aims, and let the results be what they may, unmeasured and uncounted.

2. They have selected goals, proceeded to carry them out in print, and taken as many professional steps as possible to check on the effectiveness of the work, but have not become perturbed if the pleas for action often are unheeded.

These patterns of editorial conduct or activity are derived largely from my own participation in religious journalism and my acquaintance with the *modus operandi* of various religious journalists, Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant. Although mainly subjective in origin, the generalizations rest not merely on hunches and guesses. I have made numerous reader-interest surveys, content analyses, and readability studies, and have drawn from my associations with religious editors and writers.

## II

To bring this material down to 1956, however, I obtained the co-operation of a small but representative group of religious journalists in telling me the answers to three questions:

1. What influence and effect they want their publications to have upon the rank and file of the Christian world.
2. How their publications find out the influence and effect upon that group.
3. What influence and effect they think their publications *really* have.

The replies revealed the expected but thoughtful reactions. From them and my previous experience and information I conclude, on the first question, that the editors of both Protestant and Catholic publications in the United States and Canada in general have only a hazy idea of what influence and effect they want their publications to have upon the rank and file of the Christian world.

Fourteen editors<sup>1</sup> tackled the three questions. They are executives of either large or small publications which are Roman Catholic, Canadian Baptist, Methodist, Cumberland Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal, United Lutheran, Evangelical and Reformed, and Presbyterian U.S.A. These editors also included persons in charge of two nondenominational magazines and an official of an association of religious journalists. Between them the editors produce denominational weeklies and monthlies, religious magazines sold on newsstands, and periodicals available only by subscription. All deal with material for adults. Two of the magazines, *Presbyterian Life* and *Christian Herald*, are among the most widely circulated of Protestant publications; one of the Roman Catholic magazines, *Catholic Digest*, is among the largest in that faith.

One could not, of course, expect such complete specificity or unanimity

<sup>1</sup> Editors, managing editors, or associate editors of *America*, *Canadian Baptist*, *Catholic Digest*, *Christian Advocate*, *Christian Herald*, *Christian Home*, *Cumberland Presbyterian*, *Living Church*, *The Lutheran*, *Messenger*, *Presbyterian Life*, *The Sign*, and the *YWCA Magazine*.



of reply as one might get if the question were "How often is your magazine issued?" Aims and purposes are traditionally abstract. They seemingly have little to do with the everyday job of assembling copy and pictures and making layouts. Usually the answers are resounding statements of purpose included in reports made to conferences and synods which occasionally may be framed and tacked up in editorial rooms, along with "Think" and "Think," but soon taken for granted or looked at about as much as most of us look at any framed slogan or document hanging in the same position on the wall, day in and day out.

At the other end were the replies of editors who seemed to know what they were about. The best statement, in my view, was that of the successful Catholic magazine, *The Sign*, whose associate editor, the Rev. Jeremiah Kennedy, C.P., summarized the editorial policy of the magazine as stated in its first issue, that of August, 1921. He wrote:

*The Sign*, in common with other Catholic publications, purposes to inculcate a Catholic philosophy of life; to combat the errors confronting Catholics; to interpret, from a Catholic viewpoint, significant current events; to offset, in some measure, the more worldly standards of the secular press. To this end, it publishes instructive exposition of the doctrines of the Church, pertinent articles on present-day issues, discussions of social and economic questions, and wholesome literary entertainment.

From Peter Day, the layman who edits the official Episcopalian magazine, *The Living Church*, came a much longer statement, one that appealed to me as well thought through. He wrote:

Our main object in life is to tell the readers what is going on in the Church so that they may have the data on which to base their own decisions about Church affairs. Thus basically the "effect" we want our publication to have upon the reader is to make him a better informed Churchman, and we think we do, although we have not tried to test the fact. . . .

Our editorial policy has a somewhat narrower scope, but not much. We want our readers to understand that the Episcopal Church is truly a part of the Catholic Church as a continuing body of supernatural origin in history characterized by the three-fold ministry and the seven-fold sacramental system. . . . We want all Christendom to unite upon such a platform and, although we think that this will not happen very soon, we think that the Episcopal Church should play an active part in the ecumenical movement with this end in view. . . .

In all these things we try to approach the reader as a rational person who may have an "influence" and "effect" upon us just as much as we may upon him.

These two replies are both worth study, for contrast and comparison. Most of the remaining editors were content with briefer statements. Often they left me asking such questions as "But what does this mean?" "What is implicit in this purpose?"

From Miss Alice H. Lewis, managing editor, *YWCA Magazine*:  
". . . we want the magazine to promote and undergird the Christian purpose of the Y.W.C.A."

From the Rev. Benjamin L. Masse, S.J., associate editor of *America*, the weekly magazine of opinion and comment: "We strive to help them (Catholic citizens) by adult discussion of the issues of the day from the standpoint of Catholic philosophy."

The Rev. Harold U. Trinier, editor of the *Canadian Baptist*, wrote that his paper, one of the oldest in Canada, is intended "to worthily represent Canadian Baptists, their teachings, aims, achievements, and personalities."

Another Catholic editor, and one of the most successful in reaching the rank and file, Father Paul Bussard of the *Catholic Digest*, wrote: "We want the influence and effect of the *Catholic Digest* to be the same as that of the Catholic Church by using the printed word instead of speaking." Inasmuch as I have found that Catholics and Catholic publications are often far from agreement about what Catholic teachings may be or should be, this aim is not clear. Father Paul goes on to say, however, "It is therefore necessary to create interest and we try to do that by publishing reports of things accomplished, instead of publishing sermons or moral essays."

Another reply that points to action came from Dr. T. Otto Nall, editor of the then large Methodist weekly, *Christian Advocate*: "It is our hope," he asserted, "that *Christian Advocate* may help confront its readers with the personal and social problems that Christian conscience presents in our world."

Still another Methodist editor, now associated with a nondenominational monthly of wide distribution, wrote about the *Christian Herald's* aims in this way: "If and when we fail to teach, inspire, and help the average 'man in the pew' we have failed entirely." Teach what? Inspire to what? Help, how?

In between were statements about influence or effect which were neither so explicit and well-knit as those from the *The Sign* and the *Living Church* nor so general as some of the others quoted above.

One of these I will not identify in source, for reasons that will be obvious when it is examined:

We are concerned to try to make better Christians out of the people in our groups, through our own denominational pattern, recognizing that the only choice we have is to develop Christians through the denominational pattern. At the same time we try to lift the vision of our members to the necessity of belonging to the larger

Christian fellowship—the ecumenical church—by urging and promoting participation in the National Council, World Council, UCYM, etc. Our group is not a full-fledged member of the NCC but holds membership in most of the divisions. I think we will become a full member as the time is right, and our publication will help to bring this about. Being southern, rural, and conservative, we have had a pretty hard fight to maintain the right of our Boards to continue NCC membership, and also to accept and use the RSV. But the fight has been won and our publication has had a big part in winning it (even if I may sound like boasting!).

We are now up to our neck with the race issue. From the beginning of my editorship (in 1948) we have driven hard on this—consistently influencing reports in presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly on it. In the face of the tensions over this subject we continue to hammer at what we consider to be the Christian view. We use various devices which shock people but which we believe are making good headway on it. Last week we carried a picture of a group of our small children with a little Negro boy in the group—and this was published in Memphis which is 45 per cent Negro! But this is not without repercussions.

These editorial aims and purposes seem to me to be heroic in these days of racial stress and strain; they make some of the others' statements seem smug and comfortable.

### III

Whatever may be the influence or effect these editors want their publications to have upon the rank and file of the Christian world, how do they try to find out what it is? Here we come upon considerable practical thinking about a problem that troubles every conscientious editor. Practical as they are, editors of the religious press use few of the existing methods of investigation and consequently know less than many a secular editor does about his publication and its effect.

But a few editors are beginning to use more scientific methods than reading letters and checking other undependable clues. Despite the often vague and general purposes, as we have seen, editors are realizing that they cannot afford to be indifferent to efforts to measure effect, futile as it often must seem to make the attempt.

Nine different methods of gauging influence are in use by religious journalists, to which the fourteen who answered my questions are no exception. The most common clue is the mail delivery. Paul Hutchinson once said that if a newspaper editor received seventeen letters on the same day about something he had printed he would be much impressed. He was talking, of course, of editors of secular publications. Editors of large secular papers often do receive that many on a single topic at one time, but the editor of the ordinary specialized publication, such as the religious paper or magazine, rarely finds even five on the same subject in one mail

delivery. An article in a fundamentalist journal praising ecumenicity or an editorial agreeing that jazz music has religious significance usually can produce a flurry for any religious publication, but these are not daily occurrences.

Yet this variable and undependable clue to reaction of readers is one of the most commonly relied upon by eleven of the editors consulted; only a few advanced this source of knowledge with skepticism.

The next most often mentioned clue was the reader interest survey, the professional gimmick already described and widely used by secular newspapers and magazines for the past decade or more, but varying in dependability according to the method of the survey. Mailed questionnaires are far less valuable than personal interviews, but even such interviews vary in techniques.

The third main source of information about influence is personal contact with readers, both church officials and the laity. Editors constantly attend annual meetings, both regional and national, and are upbraided or praised for some part of the content of their publications by persons who would not bother to write a letter. Such reactions, like letters, are fragmentary, but many an editor is impressed or depressed.

No other clues were mentioned by more than one or two editors. They are requests for information from the magazine, reprintings in other publications, reports adopted by official church bodies, renewals, growth in circulation, and reports from colleagues posted to make such reports. From my experience I would say that these tested editors were below normal in their use of renewals as a guide: this clue is one of the most often relied upon by secular editors and by religious editors of my acquaintance or with whose operations I am familiar.

Whatever the source of their knowledge, few editors admit that they do not have influence. Only one of the fourteen in question, for example, was so refreshingly candid as Miss Lewis of the *YWCA Magazine*. "Actually," she wrote, "I do not think that the magazine exerts any major influence. The people who come into Y.W.C.A. leadership are already dedicated to the 'cause,'" she added. "The magazine, I imagine, does no more than undergird that dedication with practical program help."

Such undergirding can be and often is important, but like many another editor, the modest Miss Lewis ventures no evidence even of this influence, which she deems minor.

Five editors pointed to research to bolster their claims of influence

or belief in the influence of their periodicals. They are editors of some of the most vigorously edited and widely read of American periodicals of religion: *The Lutheran*, *Presbyterian Life*, *The Sign*, *Catholic Digest*, and *Christian Advocate*.

Editor Robert J. Cadigan of the Presbyterian magazine, which last February, he said, was pushing a million circulation, realistically explains that "we must plead that we do not know of any basis upon which to make such a judgment, apart from the Starch studies and items like the *Report From Pastors*. In general I think we learn more from successive surveys than from single studies, because the former help to reveal trends and patterns."

Although this is not the place to recapitulate all the research reports on *Presbyterian Life*, it is of interest to mention that they show that the magazine is well read (whatever that may mean) and being so, its content must have an informational as well as an opinion-forming influence. And from the *Report From Pastors* study we learned such a fact as this: Ninety-four per cent of the pastors (419 out of 500 who received the questionnaire responded in time to be counted) reported that in the preceding year someone in their congregations initiated conversations about *Presbyterian Life* or about something published in the magazine.

Editor G. Elson Ruff of *The Lutheran* also is not content merely with letters, and uses questionnaires. But he is not satisfied with the latter, either, because, he says: "... they are answered by people sufficiently friendly to invest the time, and letters are written by persons enough irked to invest the time."

Like a few others, he points, instead, to specific results. For instance:

On visiting in the Far West we learn of a lumber camp where fifty European refugees have been given housing and employment, and are told the project developed directly from information conveyed and attitudes promoted by our paper. We have scores of such instances. One pastor tells us *The Lutheran* is sometimes delivered in his community on Saturday, sometimes on Monday; he says there is larger Sunday church attendance when the paper arrives Saturday instead of Monday.

As to long-range influence on Christian thinking, and the application of Christian thought to specific types of individual and social problems, we can't establish proof of results, but think there are results, based on testimony of individuals who write to us or talk with us.

Other editors summed up their view of what influence their publications really have by saying:

"... quite potent effect on the thinking and Christian action of our readers." (*Christian Herald*.)

"... considerable influence on the thinking of those in the group." (*Cumberland Presbyterian*.)

"... considerable influence . . . though this impression is not based on research. A very high renewal rate suggests that readers find . . . what they seek. If this is so, we are exerting the influence we desire." (*America*.)

Not research, but letters and reports led this next editor to say that he believes "... the Baptists of Canada have been well and accurately represented abroad." (*Canadian Baptist*.)

Dr. Nall replied just as his magazine was publishing a series of articles reporting on the views and practices of Methodists, based on a survey, in part, of *Christian Advocate* subscribers. Hence he said, "We believe that the *Christian Advocate* has a considerable effect on the opinions of its readers. . . ."

Father Jeremiah of *The Sign*, who had summarized so effectively, in my view, the aims of the magazine, treated the matter of actual influence thoroughly. Only a small portion of his thoughtful reply can be included here.

He began by highlighting the diversified purposes of editors in selecting content: they may desire simply to interest or entertain, or they may wish to instruct or present material of beauty.

"... it would seem," he wrote, "that the editors can conclude that continued readership is an indication of influence and that they will be aware more of trouble spots where they are NOT influencing a number of readers than of general areas where they are. It is precisely here, therefore, that the third question becomes pertinent. I would like to give examples that indicate two of these trouble spots."

The first such spot Father Jeremiah notes is in the area of what he calls social teaching (national and international affairs, labor, etc.). The second is the world of art. The problems of the second are possibly less familiar to laymen and other editors than those of the first area, so his instances are given in some detail here.

Each year we use a four-color religious painting on our December issue. In 1953 we used the Niccolini-Cowper Madonna of Raphael. There were a number of complaints: the unclad Christ (strong objection to this), the expression on the Child's



face, the "ugly" Virgin; some readers wanted to know where we "found" such a picture. In 1954 we had one of our illustrators paint a cover. The painting had a quiet, reverent tone and was a tight, realistic painting. There were no complaints; there were a number of compliments. In 1955 we had a cover by Alex Ross, a top illustrator who has also taught, e.g., conducted a workshop in creative painting at Catholic University. The painting was modern, symbolic, basically realistic without verging on the photographic. We were swamped with complaints: Communistic, sacrilegious, distorted, horrible, hideous, etc.; readers wanted to know where we found this Alex Ross, were ashamed of the cover, tore it off, pasted other pictures over it, wondered how priests could approve of such a painting of the Holy Family, cancelled their subscriptions. We could not, of course, complain simply because they didn't like it. What was disturbing was the indication of lack of awareness of basic artistic problems or accomplishments and the violence of the reaction to something that did not fit into what they were used to—sentimental religious paintings and photographic realism.

Father Jeremiah's final observation seems to me to be admirably fair and realistic: "I would say in conclusion that from continued subscriptions, from approval of religious leaders, from reader surveys, and from letters, we feel that we are having some real effect upon our readers; that, at the same time, there are some areas, particularly those mentioned . . . in which it is especially difficult to influence readers; and that the blame can be put not only on our readers but also on ourselves."

The religious journalist in America thus may be wise to take his journalistic philosophy from Edwin Lawrence Godkin, founder of *The Nation* and editor of the *New York Evening Post*, rather than from William Randolph Hearst the elder or his contemporary, Joseph Pulitzer. Godkin, nearly a century ago, was not worried by failure to influence the rank and file of the people directly. In fact, he made no attempt to reach the masses of the people with his publications. He was satisfied if he influenced a comparative few, but they were, in his opinion, the right few. They were the opinion-makers, such as political and governmental leaders, teachers, the clergy, and others who could in turn influence the rank and file.

# Jesus' Virgin Birth and Non-Christian "Parallels"

THOMAS BOSLOOPER

IN 1796 CHARLES DUPUIS contended that the narrative of Jesus' birth had its origin in the ancient myth of Krishna. From his time until now alleged parallels, affinities, and sources for Jesus' origin have been noted by scholars in the literature of Indian, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greco-Roman, and Hellenistic traditions. B. Bauer, Drews (and others of the "Christ-Myth" School), Steinmetzer, Gressmann, Norden, Wendland, Seydel, Pfeiderer, de Bunsen, Cheyne, Gunkel, Jeremias, Fiebig, Petersen, Hartland, Usener, Soltau, Wernel, and a host of their imitators have insisted that the biblical idea had its origin in a non-Christian religion. Recently Walter E. Bundy referred to this idea with approval: "The idea of a supernatural or virgin birth is pagan, and it must have found its way into the story of Jesus through Gentile-Christian channels."<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to find a statement in all the literature of historical criticism which is more misleading.

Contemporary writers such as Bundy invariably use only secondary sources to verify such claims. The scholars whose judgment they accept rarely produced or quoted the primary sources. The literature of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* on this subject is characterized by brief word, phrase, and sentence quotations which have been lifted out of context or incorrectly translated and used to support preconceived theories. Sweeping generalizations based on questionable evidence have become dogmatic conclusions which cannot be substantiated on the basis of careful investigation.

The "history of religions" approach to the problem of the relation of the biblical idea of Virgin Birth to non-Christian birth traditions ought to be concerned with the precise meaning of "parallel," "source," "similarity," or "analogy." Up until now these terms have been employed loosely, and their use in the context of the problem at hand has suffered from a woeful lack

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<sup>1</sup> Bundy, W. E., *Jesus and the First Three Gospels*. Harvard University Press, 1955, p. 11.

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of genuine scientific concern. Actually the literature of the world contains no *precise* analogy or exact parallel to the biblical idea. Moreover, non-Christian religions do not reveal a source which will verify the claim that any one of them or combination of them provides the source for or an analogy to the Virgin Birth in Matthew and Luke. *Jesus'* "virgin birth" is not "pagan."

## I

Toward the close of the nineteenth century when historians began a serious study of the relationship of Christianity to other religions, Ernest de Bunsen tried to prove that the canonical narrative of *Jesus'* origin was derived from Buddhism. De Bunsen interpreted the Buddhistic record to say that the Buddha was "incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the royal virgin Maya." He did not hesitate to speak of Gautama as "born of the Virgin Maya."<sup>2</sup> Although the Buddhistic is the closest of all the proposed "parallels" to the biblical idea, close examination reveals that the two ideas really are not similar. Moreover, there is no evidence to substantiate de Bunsen's claim.

The oldest accounts of Buddha's ancestry presuppose nothing abnormal about his birth. In one place he is spoken of as being well born on his mother's and father's side for seven generations back.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere when the Buddha referred to the Lady Maya as "the mother who gave birth to me," he at the same time spoke of "King Suddhodana my father."<sup>4</sup>

In two places in the canonical Pali Scriptures the conception and birth of Buddhas is described in detail.<sup>5</sup> Both passages elaborate the descent of the future Buddha from the "Tusitā body" into the mother's womb, the appearance of the Buddha in the mother as a shining gem, and the accompanying wonders in the natural world. The first passage is distinctive for its explanation of conception in terms of the combined agency of three elements: the father, the mother, and the "genius" (or being to be born). "But when, monks, a father and a mother come together, and it is the mother's period and the being to be born is also present, then, by the combined agency of

<sup>2</sup> *The Angel-Messiah of Buddhists, Essenes, and Christians*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1880, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Digha Nikaya* i, 113, *Sonadapda Sutta* 5, T. W. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part I, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. II. London: Henry Frowde, 1899.

<sup>4</sup> *Buddhavamsa* XXVI, Bimala Churn Law, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IX, *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon*, Part III. London: Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> *Acchariyabbhutadhamma-sutta*, *Majjhima* iii, 118 of the "Middling Collection." Albert J. Edmunds, *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, Vol. 1. Philadelphia: Innes and Sons, 1914, pp. 167-168.

*Māhāpadāna-sutta*, *Digha* ii, 12, T. W. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part II, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. III. London: Henry Frowde, 1910.

these three, a seed of life is planted."<sup>6</sup> There is nothing particularly "virgin" about this.

The core of the Buddhistic tradition of *miraculous* conception is contained in the "noble elephant" legend. At conception the mother Maya dreamt this dream: "A noble elephant, white as silver or snow, having six tusks, well proportioned trunk and feet, blood-red veins, adamantine firmness of joints, and easy pace, has entered my belly."<sup>7</sup> In preparation for this event the earth was covered with a green carpet, the evils of great heat or cold were absent, and everywhere there was calm and quietness.

Similar and more highly developed tradition is recounted in the Buddha-Karita of Asvaghosha and in the Nidānakathā, Jātaka. Features characterizing this tradition are: ". . . Māyā . . . holding him in her womb, like a line of clouds holding a lightning-flash"; "the future Buddha left his mother's womb like a preacher descending from a pulpit or a man from a ladder, erect . . . unsoiled by any impurities from contact with his mother's womb . . ."; at his birth he took seven steps, and at the seventh he shouted "I am the chief of the world."<sup>8</sup>

The Māhavastu records practically all the history, quasi-history, and legend pertaining to Buddha. In this his supramundane characteristics are graphically brought out, and the supreme qualities of Maya are emphasized. "Bodhisattvas enter the womb of a mother who observes the fasts, who is outstanding among women, who is joyful, distinguished, holding no intercourse with what is mean, who is gracious, pure of body, and tender of passion, is of good birth and family, comely, beautiful, renowned, tall and well proportioned, and accomplished and who is in the prime of life, learned, wise, mindful, self-possessed, in all ways right-minded and perfect, the very best of women."<sup>9</sup> The birth narrative climaxes with a description of the "Savior" which enumerates his "thirty-two marks of excellence," among which are included his "feet with level tread," his "long toes and fingers," his excellent "sense of taste," his skin "the color of gold," his "long and slender" tongue, his voice "like that of Brahmā," his eyelashes which are "like a cow's," and his head which is shaped "like a royal turban." Among other things it is also noted that he has "the gait of

<sup>6</sup> *The Majjhima-Nikāya*, transl. from the Pāli by the Bhikkhu Silācāra, second edition. München-Neubiberg: Oskar Schloss, 1924, p. 236.

<sup>7</sup> Lalita-vistara 6, Rajendralala Mitra, *Bibliotheca Indica*, Vol. 2. Calcutta: At the Baptist Mission Press, 1882, p. 94.

<sup>8</sup> Rhys Davids, T. W., *Buddhist Birth Stories or Jataka Tales*, Vol. 1. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1880, pp. 58 ff. Cowell, E. B., *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, Part 1, *The Buddha-Karita of Asvaghosha*; *Sacred Books of the East*, edited by F. M. Müller, Vol. XLIX. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1894.

<sup>9</sup> *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. XVIII, *The Māhavastu*, Vol. 2, J. J. Jones. London: Luzac and Co., 1952.

a swan," "regular teeth," blue eyes, and a hairy mole between his eyebrows.<sup>10</sup>

If these references are not enough to discourage objectively minded analogy hunters, the textual problem at least ought to caution scholars against advocating the theory that the narratives of Jesus' birth in Matthew and in Luke were derived from Buddhistic tales. Although in his article on "Buddhism" in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (eleventh edition) Rhys Davids states that the canonical Pali texts received their present form before the fourth century B.C., both the Lalita-vistara and the Jataka tales form a great composite, the growth of centuries; and according to Hopkins the oldest extant text of Jataka dates from A.D. 500.<sup>11</sup> Windisch, Götz, and Faber all dated the Nidānakatha, the Mahāvastu, and the Lalita-vistara all between A.D. 77 and 500. J. J. Jones described the Mahāvastu as a compilation which may have originated in the fourth century A.D.<sup>12</sup>

Scholars, however, have overlooked the place in which an affinity between Christian and Buddhistic tales is apparent. At the point of Christian apocryphal legends there is an obvious parallel between Buddhistic and Christian birth traditions. In both, the child to be born chooses his mother beforehand; the mother is supreme among women; the White Elephant or White Bird (reference to Mary's conception in Hanna<sup>13</sup>) is the symbol of conception, and the gem is the analogy for the unborn child (in Maya a shining stone, in Hanna a white pearl<sup>14</sup>); the mother's pregnancy is without pain and the usual discomforts; the infant is brilliant as the sun and pure and undefiled at birth; wonders occur throughout the natural world; he announces at birth who he is; and the new-born child is received immediately with royal pomp and ceremony.<sup>15</sup>

At some points the analogies are striking but not as precise. In Buddhism the ideas of Gotama's pre-existent activity and purity at birth are much more highly developed than in the Christian stories. The same is true for the "manifestations in nature."<sup>16</sup> In Buddhism the perfection of

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* An almost identical account of Dipankara Buddha, under whom the Gotama made his resolution to win enlightenment, is in *The Mahāvastu*, Vol. 1, J. J. Jones, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. XVI, London: Luzac and Co., 1949.

<sup>11</sup> Hopkins, Edward W., *India Old and New*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901, p. 186.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. xi.

<sup>13</sup> Budge, E. A. Wallis, *The History of Hanna, the Mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Legends of Our Lady Mary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4 ff.

<sup>15</sup> See M. R. James' *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1924) for the stories: "Protevangelium Iacobi," "The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew," "The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary." See also: James' *Latin Infancy Gospel*, Cambridge, At the University Press, 1927; R. H. Charles' *The Ascension of Isaiah*, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1900, p. 74; and J. R. Harris' *The Odes of Solomon*, Cambridge, At the University Press, 1909, p. 114.

<sup>16</sup> In the *Nidānakathā*, *Jātaka* for example, "musical instruments played without players, bracelets and ornaments jingled by themselves . . ."

Maya's body as suitable for birth of a god is described in much greater detail than in the analogous story of Mary.<sup>17</sup> In the Buddhistic tale the perfection of the several members of Gotama's body are stressed and enumerated. In the Christian tradition Mary is the object of this concern, and the prodigious characteristics of the infant are ascribed to Mary rather than to Jesus. Whereas in the stories of Buddha the description of the gem is always confined to Buddha and to his prenatal state, in the Christian legend the pearl is passed on from Adam from the beginning and is applied to Mary.

The story of the Virgin Birth in the New Testament should not be drawn into the question of the relationship between Buddhistic and Christian birth narratives. If there is a bridge between the Christian and Buddhistic tales, it is at the point of Christian apocryphal traditions. Properly speaking, the only possible clear analogy is between Buddhism and Old Roman Catholicism.

## II

Although the "analogies" between the Virgin Birth in the New Testament and birth traditions in other religions have not been as close as those in Buddhism, spokesmen have arisen to advocate that the Christian birth narrative was derived from one of several other possible sources. Arthur Drews took up Dupuis' suggestion of the "Krishna" parallel; Thomas K. Cheyne, the Zoroastrian affinities; Steinmetzer, Petersen, and Norden found Egyptian analogies; Hartland, Greco-Roman sources; Usener and Soltau, Greek parallels; Norden, Hellenistic influence. The texts of these religions, however, yield even less information than Buddhistic literature.

The myth of Krishna elaborates how the divine Vishnu himself descended into the womb of Devaki and was born as her son, i.e. Krishna. The Hindu *Vishnu Purana* relates: ". . . Devaki bore in her womb the lotus-eyed deity . . . No person could bear to gaze upon Devaki, from the light that invested her, and those who contemplated her radiance felt their minds disturbed."<sup>18</sup> Here, unlike the biblical narrative, the deity is not only the effective agent in conception but also the offspring. Had the biblical idea been borrowed from this it would read "Yahweh (or Elohim) descended into Mary's womb and was born as her son."

<sup>17</sup> *Salutations to the Members of the Body of the Blessed Virgin Mary* in Budge's *Legends*, pp. 236-44.

<sup>18</sup> Taken from T. W. Doane's *Bible Myths*. New York: J. W. Bouton, 1883, p. 114. Note the reference to "the light." In the *Māhāvastu* Maya refers to the one "who illumines my womb with his golden beauty." This tradition is reminiscent of the Vedic hymn "To an Unknown God": "In the beginning there arose the Golden Child, as soon as born, he alone was the lord of all that is . . ."  
*Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXII, p. 1. F. M. Müller explained that "Golden Child" literally refers to "the golden germ of child" and is an attempt at naming the sun. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXII, *Vedic Hymns*, Part I. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1891, p. 6.



The emphasis of the Assyrian and Babylonian tradition of the mother-goddess and the general concurrence of incidents between purely mythological figures portrays ideas of origin on a level foreign to New Testament thought. Assyrian and Babylonian references to origins demonstrate that the procreative concept was deified, mythologized, and expressed in two ways. First, in the idea of relationships between gods and goddesses resulting in other gods and goddesses, such as Ea and Damkina assisted by Apsu giving birth to Marduk, and Enki and Ninhursag generating Nimnu. Secondly, we find the idea of procreative deities—either male or female—playing a part in the birth of other deities or great personages, such as the Ugaritic tradition of Lady Asherah, "the Progenitress of the gods"; Mami, "the mother-womb, the one who creates mankind"; Father Nanna, the "begetter of gods and men"; the Assyrian traditions that Tukulti-Urta was created by the gods in the womb of his mother, and that Sennacherib's birth was assisted by Ea who provided a "spacious womb" and Assur, "the god, my begetter"; and the North Arabian myth of the mother-goddess who was responsible for Dusares. The Assyrian and Babylonian tradition was extremely flexible in the descriptions of conception; but nowhere is there anything precisely analogous to the incident in Matthew and in Luke.

The conclusion is similar when we compare Jesus' origin with stories from Zoroastrianism. The biblical idea is one of direct operation of divine power, whereas the Zoroastrian idea is one in which the divine factor only assists in the preservation of Zoroaster's seed. Moreover, the myth of Zoroaster's origin specifically describes the conjugal relations of his parents.

The Avesta and the Pahlavi texts both include the tradition that the "kingly Glory" is handed onward from ruler to ruler and from saint to saint for the purpose of illuminating ultimately the soul of the Zarathushtra (Zoroaster). It is ordained in heaven, according to the tradition, that the Glory shall be combined with the Guardian Spirit and the Material Body so as to produce the wonderful child from this threefold union.

The descent of the Glory is described in three distinct and separate stages. First the Glory descends from the presence of Aūharmazd, then passes through heaven down to earth, and finally enters the house where the future Zarathushtra's mother herself is about to be born. It unites itself with her and abides in her until she reaches the age of fifteen when she gives birth to Zarathushtra. Meanwhile the archangels Vohūman and Ashavahisht convey to earth the Guardian Spirit, bearing it in the stem of the Hōm-plant. Finally the Substantial Nature or Material Body which completes the triad

is miraculously combined with a special mixture of milk and water and Hōm, and the parents of the future prophet drink it. Despite the efforts of demons to prevent conception by three times uttering scurrilous remarks to the parents Pōrūshāspō and Dūkdāub as they are having intercourse, the conception takes place. The birth is attended by marvels, and evil forces continue to be at work to destroy the infant.

There is no textual evidence, either, to support Cheyne's statement that the Zoroastrian Saoshyant (Savior) "was born of a Virgin."<sup>19</sup> Cheyne made that assertion on the basis of the following passage from the "Bundahish" (xxxii, 8):

This, too one knows, that three sons of Zaratūst, namely, Hūshēdar, Hushēdar-māh, and Sōshyans, were from Hvōv; as it says, that Zaratūst went near unto Hvōv three times, and each time the seed went to the ground; the angel Nēryōsang received the brilliance and strength of that seed, delivered it with care to the angel Anāhid, and in time will blend it with a mother.<sup>20</sup>

Elsewhere the tradition explains that a maid, Eredat-fedri, bathing in Lake Kāsava, will conceive by that seed and bring forth the Savior Saoshyant; moreover, his two forerunners, Ukhshyat-creta and Ukhshyat-nemah, will be born in the same way to Srūtāt-fedhri and Vanghu-fedhri.<sup>21</sup> Neither the birth of the Saoshyant nor the birth of Zoroaster is "virgin" in the sense in which the same term is descriptive of the event in the New Testament.

The Egyptian tradition of the idea of parthenogenesis in the story of the goddess Neith (Net), the legend of the birth of Horus, the legend of the god Re generating with the wife of a priest, and the doctrine of the divinity of kings have been pointed out as possible sources for the biblical "virgin" tradition. All of this material, however, must be understood in the light of what may be called the ancient "mystery of procreation." Basic to Egyptian thought was the belief that Re was the fecundating principle of life other than human. By the time of Pharaoh Amen-hotep IV, deity was made responsible even for human procreative processes.

Kings capitalized on this idea and particularized it by claiming lineal descent from Re. Thus a Pharaoh was thought to be the offspring of a god and a mortal mother. Through the years this theme developed into the literary version of the god Re generating with the wife of a priest, and finally it reached stereotyped form in a series of reliefs and inscriptions such

<sup>19</sup> Cheyne, T. K., *Bible Problems*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904, pp. 200-1.

<sup>20</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. V, Pahlavi Texts, Part 1, Tr. by E. W. West. Oxford, 1880, p. 144.

<sup>21</sup> *S. B. E.*, Vol. XXIII, Tr. by J. Darmesteter. Oxford, 1883; Farvardin Yast XX, note 2, p. 195.

as those on the Der el-Bahri temple which tell about the birth of Queen Hatshepsut (which legend depicts her as a boy) and the inscriptions at Luxor which tell about Amenhotep III.<sup>22</sup>

This legend, Norden thought, was the primary motif over against which the Gospel narrative is cast.<sup>23</sup> But is there anything in the Egyptian legend which warrants this conclusion? The inscription opens with Amon (Re) prophesying the birth of Hatshepsut with the promise of great power. An interview between Amon and Thoth follows, in which Thoth mentions that Queen Ahmose's husband is an old man and while his majesty is away it would be opportune for the god to go to her. In the next scene Amon and Queen Ahmose are seated facing each other, and the god extends to her the symbols of life. Amon-Re changes form into the likeness of the husband Thutmose I, causes her to see him in the form of a god, and imposes his desire upon her.

Later Amon calls on the aid of the god Khnum, who created man, and beseeches him to fashion in the Queen a daughter "whom I have begotten." The next scene pictures Khnum at work at a potter's wheel fashioning the daughter with the assistance of the goddess Heket.

The Egyptian polytheistic framework for the tradition and the relations between deities and mortals described in terms of sexual intercourse, as well as the obvious association with temple prostitution (similarly in Babylonia), clearly make the theory of an Egyptian analogy impossible. The case is precisely the opposite.

Greco-Roman and Hellenistic "influences" is another theory equally difficult to demonstrate from textual evidence. The legend of Perseus (in which his mother conceived him by Jupiter when he visited her in a golden shower); stories of the generation of gods and goddesses by other gods and goddesses (such as the traditions of the birth of Apollo by Zeus and Leto, of Theseus by Zeus and Maia, of Dionysus by Zeus and Semele, of Dionysus Zagreus by Zeus and Persephone, and of Persephone by Zeus and Demeter); legends of the birth of gods by generation of a god with a mortal woman (such as the birth of Hercules by the union of Zeus and Alcmena and that of Pan by Hermes with a shepherdess); tales of the birth of heroes through

<sup>22</sup> Breasted, J. H., *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912, pp. 78-90.

In later times a similar representation was made of Alexander the Great in order that he might gain proper recognition in Egypt as god's son. Only in this way could he become the legitimate ruler of Egypt.

<sup>23</sup> Norden, Eduard, *Die Geburt des Kindes*, herausgegeben von Fritz Saxl. Leipzig-Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1924, pp. 81-2.

the union of a god with a mortal (such as Ion by Apollo and Creusa, Romulus by Mars and Aemila, Asclepius by Apollo and Coronis, and Helen by Zeus and Leda); and stories of the birth of emperors (such as the legend of Augustus' generation by a serpent-god and Atia, and his coming to be known as the "son of Apollo")—all these have been cited as the resource from which the biblical idea of the Virgin Birth has been drawn. None of these ideas are at all comparable to the biblical formula. No one who is interested in scientific objectivity would call them similar.

### III

Martin Dibelius' theory for the explanation of the relationship between Buddhist and Christian traditions must be taken into account in order to acquire an understanding of the real relationship between the Christian tradition and non-Christian narratives. The many points of agreement between Buddha legends and the stories about Jesus, he said, arise not from "borrowing" or from the phenomenon of one serving as the "source" of the other, but because of the "law of biographical analogy."<sup>24</sup> Even though events generally parallel to and vaguely similar to the biblical mother-and-child motif, conception, birth, attendant disturbances in nature, threat of adversity, and visitation to the temple can be found nearly in whole or in part in other religions, direct contact of one religious tradition with the other is not necessarily implied. Similar stories exist in various cultures because of the universal cultural and racial tendency to describe the life of a hero similarly.

What is common between Christian and "pagan" traditions is the idea of miraculous birth.<sup>25</sup> In this sense they are parallel or analogous. There

<sup>24</sup> Dibelius, M., *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*. Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1933, p. 196.

<sup>25</sup> Certain Hellenistic traditions indicate that "natural" and "supernatural" elements in the same context did not constitute a contradiction. For at least a part of the audience of the New Testament account, the "miraculous element" in the narrative was not in conflict with the so-called "natural elements."

The dual traditions of divine and human paternity in the legends about Romulus, Oedipus, and Plato illustrate this out of Greco-Roman Hellenistic thought. In Hellenistic Judaism, Philo spoke of the birth of certain heroes of the faith both in terms of human and divine generation. "Children of promise" such as Isaac were accounted for by divine paternity and called "a son of God." "He formed, He wrought, He begot Isaac . . ." Since Philo could also speak of Isaac's parentage in terms of Abraham and Sarah, who after a long time of despairing for not having had a child, "had a son of their own," it is apparent that for Philo divine paternity had a special significance. A passage in *De Migratione Abrahami* indicates that for Philo Isaac's birth had a special spiritual significance, and it was this "side" of his makeup that he traced directly to God. Elsewhere Philo indicated in descriptions of conceptions in Tamar, Rebecca, and Hannah that divine impregnation was an allegorical means of describing the origin of one who is particularly virtuous; more specifically, the origin of the virtues themselves, or, the virtuous aspect of his person, i.e., his soul. (Norden erred grievously in claiming that this Philonic idea is comparable to the Egyptian motif of Re generating with a mortal woman. Variance in form, content, and purpose is obvious.) Philo thus used the idea of miraculous birth to account for the particular virtues and personal spiritual qualities of a hero.

is also a striking difference, however, between the Christian and non-Christian traditions. The Christian formula is unique. The idea which it contains—divine conception and human birth without anthropomorphism, sensuality, or suggestions of any moral irregularity—is to be found nowhere in the literature of the world outside the canonical biblical narratives. Rather than being an idea borrowed from other traditions, it is original with Christianity. The Christian story of miraculous birth reflects primitive Christian belief: belief in one God who is mighty in his creative power, belief in the supreme dignity and worth of man, belief in the imperative of the moral life, and the conviction that the nature and person of Jesus should be described in language which is descriptive of both the divine and the human.

The Christian story of the Virgin Birth is as different from pagan "analogies" as monotheism is from polytheism, as different as biblical ideas of the relationship between God and man are from the mythological activities of gods in human affairs, and as different as the polygamous and incestuous pagan society was from the Christian teaching on morals and marriage. Primitive Christianity as opposed to Gentile thought (Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Persian) believed in marriage as over against asceticism and monogamy as over against polygamy. Over against early Catholic Christianity (as reflected in apocryphal tradition) and Buddhistic thought, it believed that sex in itself was not sinful and that moral order could result from the human process of birth. Furthermore, primitive Christianity did not project its hope for a new society into the life of the gods, i.e. into supra-human speculation. Its hope for humanity lay in reflection on Him who was the first in a new order within society.<sup>26</sup>

Real significance lies in the fact that in the most general connotation of miraculous or extraordinary birth, Jesus' Virgin Birth was analogous to non-Christian parallels, but in its precise content and form it was in no way analogous to them. Because extraordinary birth was a universal theme, the early Christians had a point of contact with the ancient world, and because of the unique content and form of the Christian birth narrative, the Christians had a distinctive message or truth to convey to pagan society. In the Christian formula of conception by the Spirit and birth from a woman,

<sup>26</sup> The later Roman Catholic idea of perpetual virginity together with ascetic and docetic emphases have obscured the original implication of the word "virgin." Originally the emphasis was on God and Mary, the betrothed woman. The canonical narratives stand at the bottom of an ascending scale of "virgin" tradition. The original intention of the "virgin" element in the birth narratives was to witness to the belief of the early Christian community in the humanity of Jesus.

Christianity's estimation of its Savior and its view of man were conveyed to the world.

Whether the story of Jesus' Virgin Birth be understood as historical or as legendary, one thing is certain; the Virgin Birth (either as history or legend) is of fundamental and primary importance to both the Christian and the non-Christian world. Taken either as history or legend, it is an exalted concept of God's action in the life of man, and as such is an idea which all men need to know.



## Second Century References to the Mother of Jesus

STEPHEN BENKO

**B**OTH THE PAPAL DOCUMENTS which proclaimed the recent Marian dogmas claim the support of the second-century Fathers. The bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, announcing the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, says:

... to demonstrate the original innocence and sanctity of the Mother of God, not only did they frequently compare her to Eve while yet a virgin, while yet innocent, while yet incorrupt, while not yet deceived by the deadly snares of the most treacherous Serpent; but they have also exalted her above Eve with a wonderful variety of expressions. Eve listened to the Serpent with lamentable consequences; she fell from original innocence and became his slave. The most blessed Virgin, on the contrary, ever increased her original gift, and not only never lent an ear to the Serpent, but by divinely given power she utterly destroyed the force and dominion of the Evil One.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly the bull, *Munificentissimus Deus*, announcing the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary, refers to this idea of the Fathers with the following words:

We must remember especially that, since the Second Century, the Virgin Mary has been designated by the holy Fathers as the new Eve, who, although subject to the New Adam, is most intimately associated with Him in that struggle against the infernal foe, which, as foretold in the protevangelium, finally resulted in that most complete victory over sin and death, which are always associated in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles. . . .<sup>2</sup>

These references in themselves are substantially right, but they might be misleading if we fail to realize that the reference of the Fathers to the mother of Jesus is not exhausted with this parallel between the Virgin Eve and the Virgin Mary. Generally speaking, there is a sort of confusion concerning this problem in both Protestant and Roman Catholic opinion.

<sup>1</sup> Doheny, W. J., and Kelly, J. P., *Papal Documents on Mary*, The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1954, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

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On the one hand, Protestants like to think that the mariological development has nothing to do with the life of the early Christian Church; on the other hand, Roman Catholics like to emphasize this parallelism as if it were the most characteristic element of the mind of the Fathers concerning Mary. Both opinions are exaggerated and false. It is the purpose of this study to show that references to the mother of Jesus in the second century were more numerous than many Protestants would admit, and to show at the same time that these references have quite another character from that which the papal documents imply.

# I

1. To start with, we know that the famous parallelism occurs first in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue With Trypho* (written after A.D. 155), Chapter 100:

He became man by the Virgin, in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her. . . .<sup>3</sup>

The very first word of this sentence shows that the point in the idea is not the person of Mary, but the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. "*He became man*"—this is the truth which is in the center of Justin's theology. Everything else is only a means to prove this truth against the Jew, Trypho, or is a consequence which follows from this truth. The addition that "*He became man by the Virgin*" is a necessity and is easily understandable, when we keep in mind the fact that Justin is engaged here in a discussion with the Jewish opinion that Isaiah 7:14 rightly translated means "young woman" and not "virgin," and that the Messiah should be born in a natural way—"a man born of men." It is a theological *a priori* for Justin that the starting point of the human existence of Jesus is the person of the Virgin Mary, and it seems to me that it is only for the sake of the emphasis of this "new start" for the world that Justin offers the comparison between the beginning of "disobedience and death" and its "destruction." But in any case, it cannot be overlooked that in the mind of Justin it is Jesus Christ alone who destroys disobedience and death.

We face similar problems in Irenaeus. The most quoted passage is in *Adversus Haereses* III, 22, 4: "And even as (Eve) . . . having become

<sup>3</sup> *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I, 249.

disobedient, was made the cause of death . . . so also did Mary . . . by yielding obedience, become the cause of salvation. . . ."<sup>4</sup> If we see only this sentence alone, disregarding the general conception of the entire *Adversus Haereses*, we will have a completely false impression of the mind of Irenaeus. What we have to do is to put this passage in the light of his theory of recapitulation. From this point of view we will understand that the theory requires Irenaeus to find a counterpart for everything connected with the entering of sin into the world, so that in his recapitulation the balance might be restored. Actually we find that it is not only the obedience of the Virgin Mary which counterbalances the disobedience of the virgin Eve, but also the tree in the garden of Eden has its counterpart in the cross, the first-created man in the First-begotten, and the serpent in the dove.<sup>5</sup>

It is only in the light of this conception that we understand how Irenaeus can speak of Mary as the "cause of salvation." She is that insofar as everything can be called a "cause of salvation" which counterbalances in any way the original sin. The term could be applied to the *obedience* of Mary, the cross of Jesus, or the angel Gabriel, depending on what one would take as the cause of original sin. And in this point Irenaeus is by no means consistent. He can designate Eve as such,<sup>6</sup> but he also can speak of Adam as the one by whose disobedience sin entered.<sup>7</sup> In this latter case the natural counterpart is Jesus Christ. Actually, before he sets up the parallelism, "Eve—Mary," Irenaeus many times characterizes the recapitulation in terms of the parallelism, "Adam—Jesus."

For as by the disobedience of the one man who was originally moulded from virgin soil, the many were made sinners, and forfeited life; so was it necessary that, by the obedience of one man, who was originally born from a virgin, many should be justified and receive salvation.

There can be absolutely no doubt that in the mind of Irenaeus Jesus Christ himself is the real cause of salvation. He expresses this belief many times. And when he speaks about the *protevangeli*um he also says that it is the "seed" (and not Mary) which treads down the head of the serpent.<sup>8</sup>

2. In addition to the parallelism, "Eve—Mary," there are innumer-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 455.

<sup>5</sup> *Adv. Haer.* V, 19, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 22, 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 18, 7; III, 21, 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 23, 7.

able references to the virginity of Mary in the writings of the Fathers. There is absolutely no doubt in their writings concerning the fact that Mary was a virgin when the supernatural conception of Jesus took place and that she remained a virgin after conception. But let there be no mistake about it, the Fathers speak only of her virginity before the birth of Jesus (*"virginitas ante partum"*). They make no reference to an extended virginity of Mary after the birth. References of this sort are limited to the very early apocryphal writings. But the *virginitas ante partum* is considered to be a basic truth in the Christian faith, and this truth is proved and defended against heathen, Jews, and Gnostics. Both the *First Apology* of Justin and his *Dialogue With Trypho* are filled with arguments in favor of this thesis. So it is also with the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus.

The locus classicus upon which the theory of the virgin birth is built is the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." Both Justin and Irenaeus consider the birth of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of this prophecy; but they very peculiarly do not conceive of the virginity of Mary as something which has value in itself, or is an essential necessity in the Incarnation. The value of virginity is only that it is *the sign* of the coming of the Messiah, the external token of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

This is the reason Justin cannot accept the suggestion of Trypho that he could more easily believe in Jesus as Messiah if he had been born in a natural way. "For if He also were to be begotten of sexual intercourse, like all other first-born sons, why did God say that He would give a *sign* which is not common to all the first-born sons?"<sup>9</sup> In the same manner Justin rejects the idea that Isaiah has "young woman" and not "virgin." There is nothing exceptional when a young woman begets from sexual intercourse, there is no *sign* in that. The *sign* of the Incarnation of the Messiah is that a *virgin* conceives and bears.

Essentially the same argumentation can be found in Irenaeus:

For what great thing or *what sign* should have been in this, that a young woman conceiving by a man should bring forth—a thing which happens to all women that produce offspring? But since an unlooked-for salvation was to be provided for men through the help of God, so also was the unlooked-for birth from a virgin accomplished; God giving *this sign*, but man not working it out.<sup>10</sup>

. . . the Lord Himself gave us a *sign*, . . . which man did not ask for, because

<sup>9</sup> *Dial.*, 84. ANF, I, 241.

<sup>10</sup> *Adv. Haer.* III, 21. 6. ANF, I, 453.

he never expected that a virgin could conceive, or that it was possible that one remaining a virgin could bring forth a son. . . .<sup>11</sup>

God, then, was made man, and the Lord did Himself save us, giving us *the token of the Virgin*.<sup>12</sup>

It is worthy of our special attention that Origen, too, in his *Homily XVII* on the Gospel of Luke designates the virgin motherhood of Mary as such a sign given by God: "*Virgo mater est, signum est, cui contradicitur.*"

It is obvious that in the mind of the Fathers the Incarnation is the significant event. Everything around it has peripheral importance only. The person of Mary is important only so far as she is that "human womb"<sup>13</sup> through which the Incarnation took place. The virginity of Mary is important only so far as it is the *sign* of the Messiahship of Jesus.

3. But the virginity of Mary is not the only thing the Fathers emphasize, and the parallelism, "Virgin Eve—Virgin Mary," is not the sole allegory the Fathers use concerning Mary. There is another equally important allegory which we should not forget. This allegory arises in connection with that in the messianic work of Jesus which brings something entirely "new" into his day, and which stands over against the "old." It is the contrast of "old law" and "new law," synagogue and church, Judaism and Christianity. In this contrast Mary is considered as belonging to that part which is described as the "old" in comparison to the "new." This is an entirely neglected aspect of the early Christian mariology, and it cannot be disposed of with the remark that it is found in Tertullian and that he was not a Catholic. Tertullian's idea appears again in Hilarius. And if modern exegetes are right, this idea is hidden in many passages of the Fourth Gospel.

Tertullian voices this opinion when he comes to speak about the events recorded in Mark 3:31-35 and parallels. This is the account of the incident when Jesus was teaching in a house and his mother and his brothers came and wished to talk with him. He pointed to those who sat around him and listened to him, and said that these were his real mother and brothers. The allegorical meaning of this text, according to Tertullian, is this: Mary, the abjured mother, is a symbol of the synagogue, and the brethren represent the Jews. They remained outside, but the new disciples who were with Christ within represent the Church, which Christ prefers to any carnal relationship. Tertullian also suggests that we should understand Luke 11:

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 19, 3. ANF. I, 449.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 21, 1. ANF. I, 451.

<sup>13</sup> Justin, *Dial.*, 83.

27-28 in this same sense.<sup>14</sup> Hilarius in his *Commentary on Matthew*, XII, 24, says the same thing. Mary represents the synagogue and the brethren of Jesus the Israelites.

This symbolism coincides with what we have been lately so emphatically reminded of, by K. L. Schmidt, Cullmann, Bauer, Bultmann, etc.: namely, that a symbolic exegesis of the Cana miracle, and John's account of the words of Jesus from the cross to his mother and to the disciple, puts Mary to that side of the parallel which is supposed to represent in the first instance the "old" opinion, and in the second that of Judaism. I do not know of any Christian author from the first three centuries who would exegete these passages from the Gospel of John in this fashion; but the coincidence with these assertions of Tertullian and Hilarius shows that such a conception of Mary might not have been strange to the Fathers.

Already from these facts it is evident that it is entirely insufficient to refer only to the parallelism, "Virgin Eve—Virgin Mary," when the attempt is made to present the "mind of the Fathers" concerning Mary.

## II

From the point of view of modern mariology our presentation is negative. Indeed, the first two centuries contribute only negatively to modern mariology, and it is well known that none of the Mary doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church can be documented from this early period. Nevertheless, the writings of the Fathers are full of references to Mary and her virginity. The expression, "Virgin Mary," is familiar as early as Ignatius. But this points up a contradiction: if Mary played only a secondary role in the theology of the Fathers, why do they still refer to her so very many times? If she were so unimportant, she would not occupy as prominent a place in their writings as she actually does. Why did the Fathers start to write so exhaustively about the mother of Jesus? The answer to this question rests in the answer to the earlier problem concerning the origins of mariology.

1. The first references to Mary seem to be strongly connected with the refutation of the early heresy of *docetism*. To fight this view, to prove that Jesus had a real human existence, the church referred to the historical character of the birth of Jesus and emphasized the fact that he did have a real mother. Let us listen to Ignatius and see in what connection he mentions the mother of Jesus.

<sup>14</sup> *De Carne Christi* 7: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiastorum Latinorum*. 70, 212.



Be deaf, then, to any talk that ignores Jesus Christ, of David's lineage, of Mary; *who was really born*, ate and drank; who was really persecuted under Pontius Pilate. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Son of God according to God's will and power, *actually born of a virgin*.<sup>16</sup>

Rather do I urge you to be thoroughly *convinced of the birth*, passion and resurrection, which occurred while Pontius Pilate was governor. Yes, all that was actually and assuredly done by Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Basically the same assertions are to be found in *Ign. Eph.* 7:1-2 and 18:2. With these the references of Ignatius to Mary are just about complete. There is absolutely no other connection in which Ignatius mentions Mary except when he proves the reality of the body of Jesus against docetistic views. In exactly the same manner he refers to Pontius Pilate to underline the historical character of the death and resurrection of Jesus. As far as Ignatius is concerned, he mentions Mary only as a proof of the real humanity of Jesus Christ.

2. Searching the writings of Justin Martyr, we will find that he refers to Mary in the *First Apology* in connection with the proof of the divine origin of Jesus through his generation by the power of the Spirit. In order to make this point clear to the pagan Roman emperor Antoninus Pius he comes to the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, the fulfillment of which he finds in the wonderful conception and birth of Jesus. Mary appears here as a proof of the Incarnation.

In the *Dialogue With Trypho*, Mary plays about the same role as she had in the theology of Ignatius. There she was a means to combat docetism, and here she is referred to in order to refute the *Judaism* represented by Trypho. What are the main arguments of Trypho? He says that the Jewish expectation was that the Messiah would be a man born of men, and that thus the supernatural generation of Jesus is a contradiction to the Jewish hope.<sup>18</sup> To this Justin answers that the birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. Then Trypho says that the prophecy was given respecting Hezekiah, and also fulfilled in him. Justin denies that, and proves that no one since Abraham was born from a virgin except Jesus.<sup>19</sup> The third main argument of Trypho is that the text does not say "virgin" but "young woman." To this Justin answers with an explanation of the "sign" referred to above. It is evident that the real concern of Justin is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the proof of his messiahship. Every-

<sup>15</sup> Trall. 9. *Library of Christian Classics*, I, 100.

<sup>16</sup> Smyrn. 1:1-2. LCC. I, 113.

<sup>17</sup> Magn. 11. LCC. I, 97.

<sup>18</sup> Dial. 47, 49.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 66, 67.

thing in the *First Apology* and the *Dialogue* said directly or indirectly about Mary serves this one purpose, and Justin says not one word more about the Virgin than is necessary for this purpose.

We can see that Mary is mentioned by the Fathers only in those cases in which there is special reason to mention her. These might be heretical views concerning Jesus Christ which had to be refuted, e.g. docetism or Judaism; or they might be basic Christian truths which had to be proved, e.g. the Incarnation or the conception by the Holy Spirit. But if there is no such reason, Mary is not mentioned. Such is the case in I Clement. This letter has no reference to Mary at all, not even in Chapter 55 where it sets some women (Judith and Esther) as examples before the congregation. This would have been impossible if Mary had been either a prominent figure in the life of the early church or of theological importance. Polycarp, Barnabas, Didache, and II Clement say nothing about her.

3. In the second century it was *Gnosticism*, a systematic denial of the humanity of Christ, which provoked Irenaeus to prove the Christian belief in the human reality of Christ through his birth from a human mother. Gnostic ideas concerning Jesus Christ varied, as Irenaeus himself testifies in the *Adversus Haereses*. There were some who maintained that Christ was produced by the Demiurge, that when he was born he passed through Mary just as water flows through a tube, and that the Savior, who belonged to the Pleroma, descended upon him at his baptism. Others held that Jesus was the natural son of Mary and Joseph, and that the Christ was a different person. Again, others said that the Savior was without body, without birth, and without figure. Such were the ideas of the Gnostics. We can see at a glance that they are rooted in a principle common to them all, namely, the denial of the Christian belief that Jesus was the Christ and that he was a human being who was at the same time the Son of God.

Irenaeus' main effort was therefore to prove the humanity of Jesus Christ, and this he did with constant references to Mary, a human being, as really the mother of Jesus Christ, the one from whom he took flesh and all that was human in his existence. ". . . why did he come down into her if he were to take nothing of her?" Examples follow, showing the humanity of Jesus: he was hungry, wearied, sorrowful, etc. "For all these are tokens of the flesh which had been derived from the earth, which He had recapitulated in Himself, bearing salvation to His own handiwork."<sup>20</sup> "And why did He acknowledge Himself to be the Son of man, if He had not gone

<sup>20</sup> *Adv. Haer.* III, 22, 2. ANF. I, 455.

through that birth which belongs to a human being?"<sup>21</sup> Now, he who was born of Mary was Christ himself, says Irenaeus.<sup>22</sup> Neither the Gospel nor the apostles knew any other Son of man, only him, who was of Mary.<sup>23</sup> To separate Jesus from Christ would be the same as if one were to try to separate the Apostle Paul as the person who had been born from the womb from that person who preached the gospel. This is impossible!<sup>24</sup>

The two different qualities in the person of Jesus Christ were bound together in one person, namely, in that one which was born of Mary. But his deity and his humanity were two counterpoles in Jesus Christ. His deity was the consequence of his generation by the Holy Spirit, and his humanity was a consequence of his conception in and birth from Mary. This was the perfect union of God and man<sup>25</sup> which was necessary in order that Jesus Christ might be able to recapitulate in himself the ancient formation of Adam and to accomplish the redemption of mankind. Mary was in this process clearly the means of the Incarnation—in the words of Justin, that "human womb" through which Jesus received his humanity. Irenaeus emphasized this humanity so much that he even called the Gospel according to St. Matthew "the Gospel of the humanity" of Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup> And this is the point, I think, which makes evident the real importance of Mary in the theology of Irenaeus—she communicated to Jesus his human nature.

Mary's function in this communication is passive. The Son of God was *made* the Son of man<sup>27</sup> through her. The interest of the Fathers in Mary is restricted to this fact, and even when they refer to her in their struggle against docetism, Judaism, and Gnosticism, this is what they see in her and what they know her to be—the mother of Jesus, not less and not more.

The mariological development was furthered in the Church's later struggle against Manicheism and Nestorianism. Accompanying these struggles were other contributing elements not present in the first two centuries. These "other" elements were the influx of pagans who entered the Church, bringing with them the primitive desire for their goddesses; the growing popularity of the apocryphal writings the origins of which were mostly Gnostic; and the influence of a quite natural and human mother-complex, strongly represented in the polytheistic and syncretistic religions

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 33, 2. ANF. I, 507. Cf. also III, 18, 3; 19, 1; 20, 3; 21, 4, etc.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 16, 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 12, 7; III, 16, 4-5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 12, 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 1, 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 11, 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 16, 3.

and also in Christian circles in the Gnostic systems (*Achamoth*). The reason, however, for the first references to Mary was the fight against these alien religious systems and their influence in the Christian Church.

### III

As indicated, an adequate understanding of the mind of the Fathers concerning the mother of Jesus must bear in mind *all* these elements at the same time. And in the light of this understanding one comes to the following double conclusion:

1. The roots of the interest in the mother of Jesus go deeper into the history of Christian doctrine than the average Protestant minister or layman would admit. The fact that Justin Martyr in A.D. 155, and, even before him, Ignatius about A.D. 110, could refer to Mary in the most natural manner shows us that she was commonly known in Christian congregations. If it is true that Mary and her part in the Incarnation were already well known in A.D. 110, then it is quite logical to think that the beginning of the interest in her was even earlier. And if it was only fifteen or twenty years earlier, we are not merely close to, but in the Apostolic Age, in the time when the books of the New Testament were written. It is not impossible that in Galatians 4:4 we have the first use of and pattern for the way of argumentation Ignatius used so enthusiastically and Irenaeus brought to such a perfection, in proving the humanity of Jesus.

It is necessary also to make sure just what was the object of this early interest in Mary. My answer to this is, that the Fathers were interested in her merely as the mother of Jesus. And there is absolutely no reason to think that general public opinion at the time thought about her differently. Because Jesus Christ was bound together with the human race through his birth by the Virgin Mary, she is therefore the source of his humanity. Though a passive part in the Incarnation, she is still a part. All of this has nothing to do with the new Roman Catholic doctrines, and nothing whatever to do with primitive, superstitious mariolatry. The mistake many Protestants make is that, in their entirely right and just fight against an unbiblical mariology and mariolatry, they completely forget that according to the predestined plans of God, Jesus Christ had to have a mother. Incarnation means to take on flesh, and Jesus Christ took flesh through the Virgin Mary. Perhaps not more, but at least this much does belong to the theology of the Fathers, and it should have a place in the expression of our faith today.

2. Further it is clear that the reference of the two papal bulls to the

parallelism, "Virgin Eve—Virgin Mary," is wholly insufficient if such reference is supposed to represent the opinion of the Fathers concerning Mary. Just to call to mind that the Fathers compared Mary with Eve before she committed sin is not enough, because it is misleading. It creates the impression that the synthesis of the teaching of the Fathers is what the *Ineffabilis Deus* says: "that she approaches as near to God Himself as is possible for a created being." But as has been indicated, this is positively not in the parallelism either of Justin or of Irenaeus. The thought of the Fathers cannot be fully expressed with the observation that they compared Mary to Eve and in so doing implied that she too was pure, innocent, and sinless in a "just created" way, because this alone is not the whole truth.

The suggestion in the *Ineffabilis Deus* that "The most blessed Virgin, on the contrary [to Eve], *ever increased her original gift . . .*" is not in the teachings of Justin and Irenaeus. The fact of the matter is that there is no idea like that included, meant, or suggested in their parallelism of Mary and Eve. Likewise it is wrong when the bull goes on: ". . . and not only *never lent an ear to the Serpent*, but by divinely given power *she utterly destroyed the force and dominion of the Evil One.*" Justin and Irenaeus at no time even approached this notion of whether or not Mary "lent an ear to the Serpent," and it is wrong to suggest that they did.

It is, further, contrary to the teaching of the Fathers to indicate that the serpent of the protevangelium was destroyed by Mary. Both Justin and Irenaeus say clearly, and it cannot be misunderstood, that the destruction of the serpent was the work of Jesus Christ. This is what Justin says after the comparison of Mary to Eve:<sup>28</sup>

And by her has He been born . . . by whom God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him; but works deliverance from death to those who repent of their wickedness and believe upon Him.

Similarly Irenaeus:<sup>29</sup>

For this end did He put enmity between the serpent and the woman and her seed, they keeping it up mutually: He, the sole of whose foot should be bitten, having power also to tread upon the enemy's head; but the other biting, killing and impeding the steps of man, *until the seed did come appointed to tread down his head*,—which was born of Mary, of whom the prophet speaks. . . .

The bull *Munificentissimus Deus* is more cautious. Instead of saying that Mary "destroyed the force and the dominion of the Evil One," it says that Mary was "most intimately associated" with Jesus Christ "*in that*

<sup>28</sup> *Dial.* 100. ANF. I, 249.

<sup>29</sup> *Adv. Haer.* III, 23, 7. ANF. I, 457.

*struggle against the infernal foe.*" But this also is not said by the Fathers. They do not suggest that Jesus *and* Mary destroyed the serpent; they hold strictly to the biblical truth that Jesus Christ destroyed him. In spite, however, of the more moderate phrase, "most intimate association," the conclusions drawn from it are far from moderate. "Consequently, just as the glorious Resurrection of Christ was an essential part and the final sign of this victory, similarly that struggle which was common to the Blessed Virgin and her divine Son should be brought to a close by the glorification of her virginal body . . ." <sup>30</sup> This not only is not included, meant, or suggested in the writings of the Fathers; it is something which Irenaeus certainly would call "a system which they falsely dream into existence, and thus inflict injury on the Scriptures, while they build up their own hypothesis." <sup>31</sup>

#### IV

What I have set as my aim in the introduction of this study seems to be sufficiently proven. Now I shall sum up my conclusions briefly.

In contrast to the common Protestant belief, Mary as mother of Jesus does have an important role in the early Christian theology. Jesus received his human form out of her. Thus she represents the *human* element at the birth of the Savior. In consequence of this belief, in the thinking of the early Fathers Mary is connected always with the *physical* side of Jesus' life. The Fathers referred to her only in those passages which, in some form or other, dealt with the problem of the human side of Jesus.

All references to Mary were made only in connection with Jesus. She had no characteristics or qualities that would be of any value in themselves. This is particularly true of her conception in a virginal state, which is the *signum incarnationis*, and of her motherhood, which constitutes simply the "human womb," the physical means of the Incarnation.

In the writings of the early Fathers there is absolutely no clue that would indicate the presence of any knowledge of the Roman Catholic doctrines of "Immaculate Conception" and "Assumption." The papal bulls are misleading in suggesting such. Rather we have reason to assume that, in the mind of the Fathers, Mary represented an "old law" attitude to which Jesus was openly opposed.

<sup>30</sup> Doherty and Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

<sup>31</sup> *Adv. Haer.* I, 9, 3. ANF. I, 330.



## Reinhold Niebuhr and His Interpreters

VAN A. HARVEY

IN 1937 several of the students of the late D. C. Macintosh (and the two Niebuhrs were among them) honored him with a *Festschrift*.<sup>1</sup> Its most notable feature was that it represented a full-scale assault on a position in the front ranks of which Macintosh had labored very long. As if sensing this, he graciously accepted the handsomely bound volume but placed it unread on his library shelf. Only the appearance of several reviews which hailed it as the death blow to liberalism prompted him to take it down and read it. His suspicions were well founded, and he later remarked with his characteristic good humor that he, like Caesar, knew how it felt to be assassinated under the cover of honor and praise.

The subject of the latest volume of *The Library of Living Theology*, Reinhold Niebuhr, need have no such misgivings. Although this is no honorary volume in the usual sense—not an unmixed blessing, since, unlike Macintosh, he is not permitted the luxury of allowing it to remain visible but unread on his library shelf—it is far less critical and far more appreciative than one might have expected. This is not so much a criticism of the book as a commentary on the present theological situation and indirectly, perhaps, on the formidable power of Niebuhr's thought and personality.

Of some twenty essays, fourteen of them reflect a similar climate of theological opinion. If the authors occasionally quarrel with Niebuhr, it is all within the family. Only six are fundamentally antithetical. Not only are these criticisms rather weak but they were written by men from whom one would have expected rigorous dissent: Henry Nelson Wieman, a religious naturalist; Gustave Weigel, a Jesuit; Edward J. Carnell, a very conservative Protestant; E. A. Burt (what shall one call him?); and Alexander Burnstein, whose "Normative Judaism," as Niebuhr suggests, is a "modern

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<sup>1</sup> *The Nature of Religious Experience, Essays in Honor of D. C. Macintosh*, Harper & Brothers, 1937.

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optimistic version not dissimilar from what many Christians would call the optimism of 'normative Christianity' " (p. 451).

This consensus of opinion constitutes much of the unity of the book and prompts some slight comparison with the Macintosh *Festschrift*. Macintosh's grapes set his "sons'" teeth on edge; Niebuhr's are being chewed if not digested. Macintosh's students rose up in revolt; Niebuhr's seem bent on extending his perspective. It is too strong to say that Niebuhr has cast up Niebuhrians. It is best to state simply that the agreements are more impressive than the disagreements. Which is the healthier theological situation it would be presumptuous to say. Nor is it possible to draw any clear inference, since Niebuhr would have been an independent student in any case and his impact on a subsequent generation would doubtless have been great. Nor did he create the climate of opinion single-handedly. He was only one of an impressive half-dozen which have recently enriched the collective life of the church.

If the detractors of this consensus argue that it is a fad or represents a failure of nerve or uncritical subservience, the contributors would surely reply that they are not acolytes of Niebuhr, but that his perspective is at once more faithful to the historic Christian faith and more relevant to the facts of human existence.

## I

Niebuhr's relevance is the common theme of the "friendly critics." It is reiterated in different ways by John Bennett, William J. Wolf, Paul Scherer, Alan Richardson, Paul Lehmann, Robert E. Fitch, Paul Ramsey, and, in a peculiarly self-referential form, by Emil Brunner who covets Niebuhr's impact on "men of letters, philosophers, sociologists, historians, even statesmen," and attributes his own failure to an "atmosphere ruled by abstract dogmatism" (p. 29). (Presumably an oblique reference to another Continental theologian who has given him difficulty in the past.)

What seems clear about Niebuhr, however, is how unself-consciously he went about his work. Anyone who reads the little gem of an intellectual autobiography which prefaces these essays will note how little Niebuhr was concerned originally to "speak to the men of letters" and how indirectly this speaking arose out of his involvement in the personal and social issues of his time. No one passage summarizes this so well and reflects so much of the spirit of his *Leaves From the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic* as this:

Two old ladies were dying shortly after I assumed charge of the parish. They were both equally respectable members of the congregation. But I soon noted that

their manner of facing death was strikingly dissimilar. One old lady was too pre-occupied with self, too aggrieved that Providence should not have taken account of her virtue in failing to protect her against a grievous illness, to be able to face death with any serenity. She was in a constant hysteria of fear and resentment. While my own simple idealism would have scarcely been equal to the test of facing the ultimate issue, I found myself deeply disturbed by the fact that faith was evidently of so little account in the final test. The other old lady had brought up a healthy and wholesome family, though her husband was subject to periodic fits of insanity which forced her to be the breadwinner as well as homemaker. Just as her two splendid daughters had finished their training and were eager to give their mother a secure and quiet evening of life, she was found to be suffering from cancer. I stood weekly at her bedside while she told me what passages of Scripture, what Psalms and what prayers to read to her; most of them expressed gratitude for all the mercies of God which she had received in life. She was particularly grateful for her two daughters and their love; and she faced death with the utmost peace of soul.

I relearned the essentials of the Christian faith at the bedside of that nice old soul. I appreciated that the ultimate problem of human existence is the peril of sin and death in the way that these two perils are so curiously compounded; for we fall into sin by trying to evade or to conquer death or our own insignificance, of which death is the ultimate symbol. (p. 6.)

Niebuhr moves from the concrete realities of life to reflective faith, and from reflective faith back to the realities.

One of the best essays in the volume and one of the finest introductions to Niebuhr's thought as a whole is by John Bennett. His ability to capture this movement of Niebuhr's thought and to give one a sympathetic appreciation of the man without losing a critical perspective is remarkable. It also serves as a helpful companion piece to the very good contributions of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. ("Reinhold Niebuhr's Role in American Political Thought and Life") and Kenneth Thompson ("The Political Philosophy of Reinhold Niebuhr"). Taken together, all three of them provide a great deal of illumination on Niebuhr's development from liberalism and Marxism to the curious compounding of Augustinianism and pragmatism. It is Bennett, however, who best understands the continuity of his development and the unity of his thought.

Thompson, after a fine study of Niebuhr's evolution, poses the question which has become commonplace, though not less important, among those who share Niebuhr's political perspective but not his faith: what is the relation between Niebuhr's theology and his political judgments? The more strident formulation is not in the form of a question but an assertion: there is no relation between them, a point of view recently set forward in a "review" of this very book by Sidney Hook in the *New York Times Book*

*Review* (Jan. 29, 1956). One hesitates to call it a review, since it told us nothing about the book, although something about Sidney Hook.

Thompson is less crude and more convincing, since his own question proceeds from a historical analysis which attempts to establish that to the degree Niebuhr did try to relate absolute love to political affairs, it was both the "source of his deepest insights and his most misleading political estimates" (p. 170). He charges that Niebuhr either disregarded the "iron law of politics and the enduring truths of foreign policy" or has begged the practical question of the statesman by transposing it into a philosophical or theological one (p. 172).

This is a serious criticism, although one must add that Thompson's appeal to the "iron law of politics and the enduring truths of foreign policy" is scarcely less vague than Niebuhr's formulas of which he is critical. What is this "iron law" and what are these "enduring truths"? But Thompson's criticisms can be separated from this appeal and his equally questionable conclusion that moral principles "must be derived from political practice and not imposed upon it" (p. 174). Once more the vagueness of a term ("derived") raises a question. In what sense are moral principles *derived* from practice? They may take practice into account (and this is the realism of Niebuhr) but that they are derived . . . well, that is something else again.

Bennett's essay is helpful because it speaks to Thompson's problem. Not always, perhaps, to the latter's satisfaction, but this would require a more extended consideration of a host of problems implicit in the "Realist" school of foreign policy: the definition of national interest; the meaning of "realism" and "idealism"; whether nations are or are not fit objects of moral judgment; the criteria of "prudence"; or Thompson's assumption that self-interest can be transcended and overcome "only through promoting in concert the interests of a number of groups or nations which through the impact of history may discover new interests that they may eventually come to hold in common" (p. 174). As if *that* statement didn't presuppose an implicit norm of "legitimate" interest.

Bennett argues that Niebuhr's social ethics are controlled by his theology in at least two important respects; his doctrine of man and his understanding of justification by faith. The former determines the "limits of what should be attempted in society and . . . is one of the factors which determine the direction of ethical actions" (p. 48). The latter is the "source

of motive and morale for ethical living amidst the moral ambiguities of history" (p. 50). To put it in another fashion, Niebuhr's understanding of God's demand prevents one from falling into the cynicism which lurks around the corner when it is said that moral principles are derived from political practice; and his doctrine of forgiveness prevents one from pride since our own response to that demand is inevitably tainted with self-interest.

The relation between Niebuhr's theology and his political judgments is not a deductive one—the "right" Christology does not produce the answer as to whether we should continue to give aid to Yugoslavia—and it is wrong to look for such a neat relation. But they are not unrelated either, although it is not easy to specify the relation. If Niebuhr's political judgments have often been in error (and who, after reading these essays, can doubt that they have?), it is still necessary to show that these errors are a *result* of his attempt to apply the Christian ethic and not merely the mistakes of a man immersed in the relativities of all political judgment.<sup>2</sup>

Two of the three examples which Thompson adduces to illustrate the confusion that results when abstract moral principles distort judgment are Niebuhr's polemic against the New Deal and his attack on those who favored an armistice in the Second World War. But these examples, it could be argued, do not prove that principles as such distort judgment. They only prove that in these particular cases Niebuhr was using sub-Christian principles; doctrinaire socialism in the first and a mistaken historical principle in the second.<sup>3</sup>

The problem that Thompson has posed is one which confronts all Christian ethicists and not only Niebuhr. It has come to be called in these circles "the relation of love to justice." It involves the many-dimensional problems of the relation of theory to practice, ethics to social policy, love to

<sup>2</sup> Nothing is better calculated to convince one of the relativity of all human judgments (or, if not that, at least the relativity of some of Reinhold Niebuhr's judgments which, I suppose, for some of his disciples amounts to the same thing) than Schlesinger's and Thompson's report of his thinking during the thirties and forties. Niebuhr's reply to this is delightful and, one may say, characteristically humble:

"It is rather embarrassing to retrace one's pilgrimage and more embarrassing to have it subjected to friendly or critical analysis, because it becomes so apparent that one was incredibly stupid in slowly arriving at a position which now seems valid but which required all the tragedies of history to clarify in one's own mind. Beside throwing doubt upon the reliability of the person thus examined, it prompts me to view the ephemeral character of all our convictions. I will read these chapters in this book whenever I am tempted to impatience with some young student who is hesitant to disavow what I now recognize to be illusions." (p. 436.)

<sup>3</sup> Schlesinger also calls attention to the fact that Niebuhr assailed Roosevelt's naval program as "sinister" in 1937. Bennett, without apologizing for Niebuhr's mistaken judgments, points out that Niebuhr was resisting entrance into the war as late as 1940 because he "believed that entry into the war in 1940 would so divide the nation that we might lose our liberties through the effort of the majority to coerce the minority into support of war" (p. 68). Bennett goes on to say that this balance of the considerations of justice with considerations of prudence is characteristic of Niebuhr. But to invoke prudence was not *merely* a prudential judgment, since without it a situation of even greater injustice might have developed.

law, and mutual to sacrificial love. Many of the contributors to this volume discuss either one or all of them; Brunner (pp. 29 f.), Bennett (pp. 52-61), Thompson (pp. 168-174), Williams (pp. 210-212), Fitch (pp. 305-307), and most comprehensively Paul Ramsey in an essay directed specifically to it: "Love and Law" (pp. 80-123).

Ramsey shows that despite Niebuhr's repudiation of natural law theory and his emphasis on the indeterminate nature of the self, he still is to be contrasted with Sartre and his radical "non-essentialist" view of human nature. Sartre denies that it is meaningful to speak of such a nature or essence. Man, by choosing, creates himself. Niebuhr, however insistent on man's radical freedom, still affirms that love is the law of life and the essential structure of man's nature. If this is so, Ramsey asks, doesn't this make possible a law for man and qualify Niebuhr's assertion that love is "beyond law"? He writes: "One step in the direction of properly grasping Niebuhr's thought is to understand love as the natural law for freedom. Another is to understand that what he often calls natural law, or its equivalent in his thought, is not that at all, but an application of the fundamental law of love." (p. 93.)

The most significant part of this extremely rich essay is not, to my mind, its critique of Niebuhr but its attack on the attempt to define Christian love as mutual love. Any ethic which stresses the aim of love as mutuality or fellowship or community vitiates the neighbor-centeredness of *Agape*.<sup>4</sup> With Niebuhr, Ramsey argues that mutual love is only possible by virtue of a love which is "heedless of the question whether it is mutual or not and which nevertheless affirms the being and well-being of the other . . ." (p. 107).

The whole discussion is confused, Ramsey thinks, by the emphases placed by the respective parties on the adjectives "mutual" and "sacrificial." "Love is simply love, the genuine article; and it intends the good of the beloved one and not the response of mutuality; it intends the good of the other and not its own actual self-sacrifice or suffering" (p. 121). To stress the adjective "mutual" surrenders the heedless nature of love. The emphasis on "sacrificial" obscures Niebuhr's discussion of the morality of nations.

Ramsey's essay is significant also since it poses the problem of a model by which to interpret the ethical situation of the believer. There are those who

<sup>4</sup> Ramsey has in mind Daniel Williams' analysis of love in his *God's Grace and Man's Hope* (Harper & Brothers, 1949). For another statement, although no mention is made of it in Ramsey's article, see Paul Lehmann's "The Foundation and Pattern of Christian Behavior" in *Christian Faith and Social Action*, edited by John A. Hutchison (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953, pp. 93-116).



maintain that the Christian carries certain moral principles around in his head and then applies these principles when particular situations arise. Many of us find this inadequate not only because the "wise man is aware of the limited receptiveness of reality for principles" (Bonhoeffer), but also because it oversimplifies and distorts the context in which ethical decision takes place. The Christian does not respond to principles but to other selves and their concrete needs. Community or *koinonia* ethics, at least, seems more faithful to this situation.

But Ramsey writes as if the self-neighbor relationship were the determinative one. This tends to abstract "I" and "Thou" from all the conditioning relations, and it frequently leads to an analysis in which "social ethics" is added to the system as an afterthought—"Christian Love in Search of a Social Policy."<sup>5</sup> It is then necessary to do justice to the complexity of moral responsibility by appealing to "duties to oneself" and one's "vocation." Or it requires a tortured analysis by Ramsey to explain why love sometimes requires the "sacrifice of sacrifice" (p. 109 f.).

To argue, as Ramsey does, that love simply intends the good of the neighbor begs the question to which the ethics of community seeks to speak; what *is* his good? Ramsey cannot argue, as he does elsewhere, that Christian ethics is unconcerned with the nature of the good so long as he maintains that love is the law of life.<sup>6</sup> The good of the neighbor includes his community with other neighbors. The concept of mutuality has confused the issue since it presupposes that the agent of the action is included in the aim of his action, that love intends to be loved-in-return. Ramsey's criticism of this formulation is devastating. But it still remains for someone to formulate a model which does justice to the complexity of the context in which ethical decision occurs and the demands of love.

## II

If these essays just discussed cast the most light on Niebuhr's ethics and the unresolved problems which remain, those by Daniel Williams, William Wolf, and Paul Lehmann qualify in the realm of theology.

Williams' article is quite critical of Niebuhr's use of the word "liberalism" and, in his careful way, he reveals how many of Niebuhr's problems are the problems of this liberalism: the relevance of Scripture when it is not

<sup>5</sup> Ramsey, P., *Basic Christian Ethics*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950, Chapter IX.

<sup>6</sup> Ramsey, P., *Ibid.*, p. 114 f.

received literally; tolerance; the relation of gospel to culture; the religious interpretation of democracy. He concludes that Niebuhr's rejection of the more exaggerated expressions of optimism in some liberal thought has tempted him to overlook the central Christian theme of redemption that "God does transform human life" (p. 205). This conclusion forces him to raise some questions about Niebuhr's appeal to a meaning and a love "beyond history." "How does he (Niebuhr) . . . conceive the relation between what he refers to as 'beyond history' and God's suffering and redemptive working in history?" (p. 209.)

Wolf has a good exposition of Niebuhr's doctrine of man, and occasionally makes what Niebuhr calls "some very telling criticisms on peripheral points"; criticisms which Niebuhr accepts and which are "telling enough" to force him to give up a phrase that has bothered several generations of college students, "the equality of sin and the inequality of guilt."<sup>7</sup>

Lehmann's article on Niebuhr's Christology is the most weighty theological essay in the volume. His thesis is that Christology is the leit-motiv of Niebuhr's theology and that his thought can be best understood as a development from the emphasis on the relevance of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation to its truth, from *Christus in nobis* to *Christus pro nobis*. It is a carefully worked out exposition which follows this development and which establishes Bennett's earlier point that Niebuhr's anthropology and his Christology are of a piece.

One of Niebuhr's contributions, it becomes clear, is that he has insisted on the content of revelation. Unlike some of the Continental theologians, he finds that the Word does not come as an empty address out of the blue. It is a disclosure of the essential structure of human nature and the nature of God and his involvement in human suffering and sin. In short, Niebuhr has restated in contemporary terms a Christology which is faithful to the intention of orthodoxy without relying on its metaphysical categories of "substance," "nature," and the like.

Lehmann's criticism is that Niebuhr's Christology is not "adequately trinitarian" and this, in turn, re-emphasizes Williams' point, among others, that the grace and wisdom which are revealed are not effectual and operative enough. "Niebuhr's Christological thinking does not sufficiently stress 'the

<sup>7</sup> Niebuhr's lack of defensiveness and his willingness to retract some of his famous phrases is exemplary. Some of the most treasured are scuttled in his reply to his critics: "redeemed in principle but not in fact" (p. 437); "the equality of sin and the inequality of guilt" (p. 431); and the concept of "myth" (p. 439). He even admits that his famous sermon, "As Deceivers, Yet True," stretched the text somewhat, and he writes that he is no longer "able to defend, or interested in defending, any position I took in *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*" (p. 435).

mighty acts of God' as transforming events which, having actually occurred, serve as beacon lights in a sea of historical relativity whereby the channel to the fulfillment of human destiny is charted" (p. 279).

While discussing Niebuhr's theological work, it is fitting to call attention to another "friendly critic" who writes outside of the volume under consideration: Hans Hofmann and his *The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr*. No one can question that the adjective, at least, fits; he is "friendly." Niebuhr is always doing things "forcibly," "rightly," "convincingly," "decisively," or "significantly." He is, by turns, "brilliant," "keen," "acute," and occasionally displays "burning concern," "blazing horror," or "child-like wonder." In contrast, idealists are "shallow" and "sentimental," while liberals are "inept," "out-moded," "self-complacent," and, it seems necessary to add, "false." Naturalism, of course, depersonalizes nature and men, and mysticism is an arrogant attempt to have a "tête-a-tête with God."

Much of this is excusable, perhaps, since the purpose of his book was to introduce Niebuhr to the Continent which, as yet, is unacquainted with most of his work. This was, no doubt, a very helpful and systematic exposition of one of his major themes, the doctrine of sin. It will probably prove helpful as an introduction to some in America also. Hofmann, like many of the contributors to the previous volume, interprets Niebuhr primarily as a preacher who finds himself in a very specific situation and environment which forces him to "explore the problems presented by that situation and to think them through to a helpful conclusion" (p. 10 f.).

Professor Hofmann correctly stresses the relational nature of Niebuhr's thought; that is, Niebuhr is not concerned with man apart from God and other men, or God apart from the revelation in Jesus Christ. To expound this doctrine of sin the author analyzes chronologically the major works from *Does Civilization Need Religion?* to *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. He makes very liberal use of the quotation (too liberal; between pages 73 and 85, a fair sample, 70 per cent of the text, by count, is in quotation), and he occasionally but helpfully compares Niebuhr to the three B's of Continental theology: Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann.

Although Hofmann's central thesis is that Niebuhr's thought has developed in confrontation with concrete ethical and social problems, he has made no use at all of the literature which reflects these concrete concerns—Niebuhr's countless articles and reviews. One gets no sense of the *movement* of Niebuhr's thought, which can only be grasped by moving back and forth between his books and his articles. The latter are important because, as

Bennett shows, "it is only in the light of his concrete decisions for action that we can be sure where his emphasis finally lies" (p. 46 f.).

This tendency is only intensified by a curiously un-Niebuhrian type of abstraction which is superimposed over Niebuhr's thought. Hofmann's central interpretative category is that "man is the connecting link in the relation between God and society" (. . . *der Mensch das Bindeglied der Gott-Gesellschafts-Beziehung ist*), a phrase which appears on almost every other page of this book. Man's true function is to be "a mediator of the relatedness between God and the society of men in the world."<sup>8</sup> Or consider this passage which professes to state the main theme of Niebuhr's whole theology: "religion through the living relation to God creates in man intelligent persistence in his unique function of mediation; this function produces the essence of personality and through it society first becomes a possibility" (p. 20).

Some of this abstraction is due to the translator, who has translated such German words as *Beziehung* and *Bindeglied-und Mittlerrolle* into "right relatedness" and "mediating link," and who has, by her own admission, broken up such compounds as "God-man-frame-of-reference" or "state-of-existing-in-connection." However awkward, these compounds do have connotations which are absent in such barren terms as "relatedness," "mediating link," etc. Nor has she helped the author's style with such sentences as these: "Man, by such an attempt to realize himself, not only misapprehends and distorts his true position, to determine which is the basic problem of contemporary man . . ." (p. 144), or "Man as the connecting link in the relatedness of God to society is indispensable; man is the place where the love of God imparts to man's objective world a meaning truly personal" (p. 98).

The American reader will find the *Library of Living Theology* volume a better introduction to Niebuhr.

### III

The insistence on the *relevance* of Niebuhr's thought is convincing until one realizes that all the "friendly critics," sharing the same general perspective as they do, define irrelevance similarly. Consequently Niebuhr is hailed as a true apologist who has related Christian faith to the "concrete" and "practical" problems of mankind.

<sup>8</sup> P. 24. Cf. pp. 33, 41, 55, 60, 89, 98, 103, 110, 114, 128, 137, 159 f, 154 f, 159, 163, 207, 215, 224, 238, 242.

It would be an error to hold Niebuhr responsible for failing to do what he has no interest in doing. But one can, nevertheless, raise the question whether this "relevancy" is as extensive as is celebrated. It is interesting, for example, that only three of the contributors to this volume are philosophers; Paul Tillich, Henry Wieman, and E. A. Burt. Only the former two raise philosophical questions and these are, one must add, more or less predictable. Does this mean that those who are concerned to relate themselves to the dominant and powerful philosophical currents which swirl through our universities will find a theological perspective, which has little interest in such a relation, irrelevant?

Tillich's article on Niebuhr's doctrine (*sic*) of knowledge begins with these half-humorous lines: "The difficulty of writing about Niebuhr's epistemology lies in the fact that there is no epistemology. Niebuhr does not ask 'How can I know?'; he starts knowing." (p. 36.) This lack of philosophical concern is characteristic of Niebuhr. (He writes on page 4 that one of the reasons he eschewed graduate study is that he was bored with epistemology.) It establishes at once his uniqueness and his own vocational interests. But it diminishes his relevance in this one respect. And if his vocational delimitations were to become standard operating procedure for the next generation, it does not augur well, in this reviewer's opinion, for the theological situation as a whole.

Niebuhr operates at such a high level of generalization and his criticisms of opposing perspectives are so sweeping that one can question his apologetic method as a whole.<sup>9</sup> He is so impatient with such things as value-theory, method, theory of knowledge and, *horrible dictu*, ontology, that those who are concerned with these issues find him strangely irrelevant. In reply it will not do to evoke the familiar *ad hominem* argument that this is an unreasonable demand of rationalists and empiricists "who absolutize the principles of logical consistency and coherence . . ." (p. 231). This presupposes the criteria of relevance, which is the question at issue. Relevant for whom and for what purposes?

Philosophical apologetics is in a sad state of repair in this country and abroad, somewhat ameliorated in the Continent by reason of the common language of existentialism. But in this country and in England where logical empiricism and the new "Informalism" of the Oxford analysts are increasingly influential, the language of Niebuhr, Kierkegaard, Heidegger,

<sup>9</sup> It has been questioned or, at least, compared unfavorably to the apologetic method of Austin Farrer. See Julian N. Hartt, "Dialectic, Analysis, and Empirical Generalization in Theology" in *Crozer Quarterly*, January, 1952, pp. 1-17.

and alas, even Tillich, is not always very helpful. Not because it may not be more adequate for their purposes but because, in order to be "relevant," it needs to be translated. This requires a minimal speaking acquaintance and concern with the opponents' literature and its problems. The way some of the current theological literature deals with the problems of "faith and reason," "theology and science" is naïve to the extreme; lacking, as it does, any acquaintance with the newer movements in analytic philosophy.

The old clichés which are beginning to echo and re-echo throughout our religion textbooks—"I-Thou," "Encounter," "ecstatic reason," "the essential self," "myth"—are becoming progressively inadequate to deal with a whole host of new problems that have emerged in the last quarter-century in philosophical circles other than existentialist.

It is simply a question of relevance. If apologetics is not defined as an enterprise calculated to produce faith but the attempt to relate, then it is a case of relating—everywhere. Those will be most faithful to Niebuhr who extend his concern beyond his vocational limitations. Couldn't Richardson, in his article on Niebuhr's apologetics, have found something more significant to criticize than Niebuhr's views on miracles?

This raises a broader issue. Wouldn't it be ironic if the celebration of the relevance of an ironist should so freeze the definition of relevance that it tempts us to future irrelevancy? This is only a question, not a criticism. Niebuhr's power resided in his ability to relate himself to the problems of his time. He had a grasp of the issues and the alternatives that commanded attention, and his theology was forged in relation to them. But issues and problems change, and no one can be relevant to them all. The most relevant thing to do is not to commit Niebuhr's categories to memory but to stand in Niebuhr's position; to relate rather than to continue to point to *his* ability to relate.

This may cause us to break in some measure with our past and its categories, while being faithful in a deeper sense to the spirit of that past. Theology does not become relevant by singing "We Must Be Relevant" or by defining irrelevancy to exclude future spheres of relevancy. Theology is relevant by virtue of being so; that is, by affirming the seriousness of the problems of the world whether they be in philosophy or politics. No one in our recent communal life has more consistently exemplified this ideal and enriched our understanding of what it means *to be* ministers and theologians than Reinhold Niebuhr.



## Putting the Bible Into Modern Speech

CECIL NORTHCOTT

NO GENERATION has rebelled more than this one against the seventeenth-century speech and dress which encase the Holy Scriptures. The Bible in "the vulgar tongue" of those who speak English was a revolutionary achievement of Thomas Cranmer and his successors in England, and the later achievement of the "high and mighty Prince James" put a coping stone on Bible translation which has remained in position ever since. That Authorized Version went round the world with its beauty in words, its memorable cadences, and subtle, evocative memories. In fact it was "the Bible." God's Word looked like, felt like, and even smelt like the black leather-bound volumes which accompanied the outreach of English across the world.

For over three hundred years the Holy Scriptures have appeared as the men of 1611 thought they ought to appear, on paper and by word of mouth. For the abiding glory of the King James Version is its graciousness on the ear and its musical note which aids the memory. It builds itself into the fabric of personal living. The believer carries the Scriptures with him not only through personal reading but by listening to the Bible being read. It is perhaps for that reason that the King James Version can hardly be regarded as having been demoted from its primary position by the various modern versions. For as long as congregations listen to the Bible by public reading, the King James style will have its devoted followers.

But there is no doubt that the present generation wants the Scriptures in its own tongue rather than in that of the seventeenth century, and no amount of ingenious new presentations of the King James is satisfactory. The Bible Societies on each side of the Atlantic have presented the seventeenth-century version in various modern dresses—in magazine form, in broadsheets, in booklets, in illustrated Bibles. There are Bibles with the tedious genealogies put into footnotes, and Bibles specially excerpted for youth and little children. They are all very ingenious and much to be wel-

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comed, but King James maintains his majestic sway over the lot. The Bible Societies—because of charters and constitutions—still find it impossible to distribute a Bible written in everyday speech.

Alongside King James we have had for thirty years and more the “personal translations” of Weymouth, Goodspeed, and Moffatt, which have served the English-speaking world aptly with most refreshing versions of the Scriptures sharpened with colloquialisms, and spiced with personal interpretations of words and phrases. I believe it is correct that all three translators worked independently and did not use a team of other scholars in their work. They each offered one man’s view of the Scriptures based on sound scholarship, with—particularly in the case of Goodspeed and Moffatt—a freedom to render the familiar archaisms of King James into sparkling new turns of speech.

Their successors today are Ronald Knox and J. B. Phillips. Although the Roman Catholic Knox works within the limitations of the Latin Vulgate, one can hardly believe that a scholar of his gifts has not glanced as he has gone along at the Greek and the Hebrew. One of his best combinations of translations is *The Epistles and Gospels*, in which he translates the Gospel and the Epistle for each Sunday of the Christian year, with the most useful and penetrating commentary.

J. B. Phillips (about whom I shall comment later in greater detail) is the “non-scholar” at work on Bible translating, or rather, paraphrasing into readable English. Stirred to activity by the mighty barriers St. Paul raises against himself in his Epistles, Phillips set to work to make him plain and even popular. He has succeeded most admirably, and his *Letters to Young Churches* will remain for many years as an excellent sample of how to communicate the central facts of the Christian faith as mediated through the life and experience of St. Paul.

But as with the former generation of “personal translators,” both Knox and Phillips offer individual translations—although Knox’s has the air of authority and in public reading carries the familiar ring of the Scriptures “as we know them.” The question arises for the clergyman in the public ministration of the Word, “What translation shall I use for the people to hear?” I have been in pulpits where the whole range of modern translations is offered, and there is always the tendency to fall back on the old and familiar for public reading.

It is at this point that the two new versions of the Scriptures, the Revised Standard Version, and the New Authorized Version at present in

preparation in Britain, are extremely important. The Revised Standard Version, as I understand it, came into existence because a need was felt for a version of the Scriptures "which will stay as close to the Tyndale-King James tradition as it can in the light of our present knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek texts and their meaning on the one hand, and our present understanding of English on the other." It is a *via media* between old and new, and that gives it a most useful popularity for reading in public worship. It is sufficiently fresh and stimulating to hold the attention of listeners, and yet not so brash or violent in its renderings as to suggest that here is someone playing about with the Scriptures in an irreverent fashion. The R.S.V. is a most notable achievement of scholarship at work in a team, and it is likely to hold its place in the English-speaking world for a long time.

It is not a criticism of the R.S.V. to suggest that it is not a new *translation*, but rather an *adaptation* of old and new, a re-presentation of an old garment rather than the creation of an entirely new one. Perhaps the needs of most people who want to read the Scriptures, or hear them read, are met by the R.S.V.; but does it break through to a world of new readers, as the Bible ought to do continually if it is to remain a living book? The answer, I think, must be that we still await an entirely new version of the Scriptures, a genuinely fresh translation into the everyday English that is used in the mid-twentieth century. We need a new "Authorized Version." Just as King James authorized his version, so in a (British) sense Queen Elizabeth has authorized hers, for an entirely new translation of the Bible has been in process in Britain for some years; and it will be perhaps another five years before any of it is published.

I recently talked with the eminent New Testament scholar, Professor C. H. Dodd, who is the director of this great enterprise on the Bible. In the careful manner of the British in relation to the Scriptures, the plan has been initiated by the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge and the Queen's Printers, Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode. These publishing houses, known as the Privileged Presses, own the copyright of the perpetual Bible in Britain, and only under license from them is anyone allowed to print the Scriptures. They are providing the resources for the new translation and they alone will eventually publish it. This approach to the new translation gives it the stamp of authority from the start, for in actual practice these men of the twentieth century are attempting to do for the Scriptures what the men of King James's time also did.

It is a hazardous yet necessary venture. Hazardous for many reasons,

to which no effective answers can be given until we see, read, and handle the new Bible. The main hazard appears to be the English language and its present condition, for the aim of the new Bible is to be in "everyday English." What is "everyday English"? People in the English-speaking areas of the world would give different answers, and claims would be put forward for colloquialisms, slang expressions, and the new words of this electronic age, which are all widely accepted under the heading "everyday." But not many of them would do for the Scriptures and the timeless atmosphere which is part of the very conveyance of truth that the Bible offers.

Many factors of geography, travel, and universal expansion have made the English tongue a radically different vehicle for the Scriptures than it was in 1611, and its very ability to change and adapt itself to so many "worlds" within our "universe" gives English its dynamic quality. It is not simply the fact that words like "whatsoever," "whosoever," "insomuch that," "howbeit," "peradventure," "holden," "aforetime," "behooved" have an archaic ring for us though they were powerfully active for King James's men—but a question of how we communicate the truth of the Scriptures through a tongue that has not only changed in three hundred years but is always changing. In other words, is the mid-twentieth century the right moment to solidify the language vehicle of the Scriptures for, say, the next three hundred years?

There can be no final answer to all the hazards of the new Bible, but the hazards are necessary, and the boldness of the new Bible plan is to be welcomed. In King James's day only a select few were able to read the Bible for themselves. Today the whole world is marching on to literateness. What was an accomplishment three hundred years ago is a commonplace today. We need a Bible in the everyday English tongue which will be even more flexible than the R.S.V. is, and as widely welcomed and treasured as the old King James Version has been. It will be a supreme test of the new Bible to measure up to all these requirements, for in the total communication of the Christian faith the Scriptures are basic; and their very aloofness, yet authority, have been a stumbling block to recent generations.

The Phillips achievement is all the more interesting in this respect because Mr. Phillips started off in a simple fashion as a working clergyman of the Church of England in a desire to help the people of his parish to understand the Pauline Epistles. There they were, wrapped in a reverent mystery. A piece of them was brought out Sunday after Sunday in Phillips'

parish duties, and he wondered whether any of the sense of the Apostle was "getting over" to his people. He was then a young clergyman in his late thirties with a parish on the outer confines of south-east London. At Cambridge he had read classics and English as well as theology, so when it came to trying his hand at translation he was well equipped. But it was not the New Testament scholar's equipment. If Phillips had carried the more weighty equipment of the New Testament scholar, he would perhaps not have been able to keep so close to the ordinary reader whom he has always in mind as he works. Now, in his fiftieth year, J. B. Phillips is essentially the working parson committed to a specialized task. Although he has had to give up his regular parochial duties his mind is still there where people are, and his translations of the New Testament books bear all the marks of his desire to dig out the kernel of the meaning, and to convey it to his readers in phrases they can immediately recognize and understand.

"When I began on St. Paul's letters," he said, "I felt rather like an electrician re-wiring an ancient house without being able to 'turn off the mains.' " All the time he is making the Scriptures easy to read, Mr. Phillips is aware of the inner vitality of the writings themselves, and he considers it his job to try to convey that vitality in words which the reader can immediately grasp. He is not out merely to simplify but to convey the meaning. He is a communicator rather than a translator.

It is interesting to compare Phillips with Knox, both at work on the same material and dealing with the same generation of readers. Suppose we look at 1 Cor. 9:24 ff.

*Knox:* Brethren, you know well enough that when men run in a race, the race is for all, but the prize for one. Run, then, for victory. Whoever contends for a prize has to practice, everywhere, self-restraint. . . . So I do not run my course like a man in doubt of his goal; I do not fight my battle like one who wastes his blows on the air. I buffet my own body, and make it my slave; or I, who have preached to others, may myself be rejected as worthless.<sup>1</sup>

*Phillips:* Do you remember how, on a racing-track, every competitor runs, but only one wins the prize? Well, you ought to run with your minds fixed on winning the prize! Every competitor in athletic events goes into serious training. Athletes will take tremendous pains—for a fading crown of leaves. But our contest is for an eternal crown that will never fade.

I run the race then with determination. I am no shadow-boxer, I really fight! I am my body's sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should myself be disqualified.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Knox, Msgr. Ronald A., tr., *The New Testament*, Sheed & Ward, 1944.

<sup>2</sup> Phillips, J. B., *Letters to Young Churches*. The Macmillan Company, 1947, p. 53. Used by permission.

These passages are good examples of how Phillips injects a certain raciness of speech, a memorable analogy between the "two crowns," and uses the modern idiom of "shadow boxing." Knox's "rejected as worthless" becomes "disqualified," a single word which at once is in line with the athletic atmosphere of the passage.

Comparing Phillips with King James in a familiar passage from 2 Cor. 4:7, we see how the modern communicator deals with a more complicated Pauline passage. It is the passage, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels."

This priceless treasure we hold, so to speak, in a common earthenware jar—to show that the splendid power of it belongs to God and not to us. We are handicapped on all sides but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out! Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. We are always facing death, but this means that you know more and more of life.<sup>3</sup>

In Romans 8:31, in the passages, "What, then, shall we say to these things?" Phillips turns the familiar words into direct everyday speech:

In face of all this, what is there left to say? If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Can anything separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, pain or persecution? Can lack of clothes and food, danger to life and limb, the threat of force of arms? . . . I have become absolutely convinced that neither Death nor Life, neither messenger of heaven nor monarch of earth, neither what happens to-day nor what may happen to-morrow, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord! <sup>4</sup>

J. B. Phillips now lives in the little seaside town of Swanage on the Dorset coast of southern England. The success of his translations of St. Paul's Letters, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Gospels themselves, after his hawking round the first translation to many doubtful publishers, have brought him a world-wide correspondence which has compelled him to give up normal parochial work. But he remains a clergyman of the Church of England, and one is able to tell by conversation with him that people are still his parish, and he thinks of people when he translates a difficult-to-understand piece of the New Testament. He has one eye on the run of the words and the other on the reader.

His workroom carries all the essential books of the New Testament

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19 f.



translator's equipment, but his chief working tools are the Greek New Testament of 1881 and his own quick lively gift of turning the New Testament phrase into everyday English. For instance, this is how he puts the Beatitudes from Matthew 5.

How happy are the humble-minded, for they already own the Kingdom of Heaven!

How happy are those who know what sorrow means, for they will be given courage and comfort!

Happy are those who claim nothing, for the whole earth will belong to them!

Happy are those who are hungry and thirsty for goodness, for they will be fully satisfied!

Happy are the kind-hearted, for they will have kindness shown to them!

Happy are the pure in heart, for they will see God!

Happy are those who make peace, for they will be known as sons of God!

Happy are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of goodness, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!<sup>5</sup>

I watched Phillips at work with his secretary. Sitting back in his chair, he held the Greek Testament in his hands and turned to the Book of Revelation. This is the last of the books of the New Testament he is working on to complete his translation. He read out a verse slowly, word by word, in dictation. The secretary read it back. Would it do? Was it readable? Do the people of today talk like that? Was it the everyday English of the trains, coaches, and homes? Mrs. Phillips was brought in to test out a phrase, and finally it went down into the first draft, for future revision. Phillips is a wide reader of general English literature, and also reads a lot of contemporary fiction which he finds illuminating for its lively dialogue. He recognizes that a living language changes, and that what he is doing will need to be done again for a future generation.

In any case he feels, with all the other modern translators of the Bible, that there is nothing sacrosanct or final about the Version of King James. It has served for three hundred years most valiantly, and will probably retain its pre-eminent position for many years yet. In fact, it is the freshness of a Phillips phrase alongside King James which gives it its piquancy and point. It is like reading the Scriptures in a foreign tongue—a discipline which always brings the Scriptures alive.

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, J. B., *The Gospels translated into Modern English*. The Macmillan Company, 1952, pp. 7-8. Used by permission.

# Karl Barth: A Great Septuagenarian

MARIA F. SULZBACH

A FEW MONTHS AGO KARL BARTH celebrated his birthday. The Protestant world has celebrated it with him, not only in his native Switzerland and in Germany, where he has taught for many years, but almost everywhere where theological scholarship and strength of character are appreciated. In England the Archbishop of Canterbury gave a reception in his honor and presented him with a book of essays written for the occasion by a group of younger British theologians. The reception was attended by Christians of all denominations.

But there seems one omission from the international chorus of acclaim: America. This is a paradox. More Protestants live and contribute to their churches in the United States than in any other country in the world, America has more theological seminaries than any other country and American thought is in the realist and pragmatist tradition. But we all but ignore the greatest Protestant thinker in Europe. We Americans are shy of abstract speculation and like to draw our conclusions on the basis of established facts; yet our response to Karl Barth and his work has been puny compared with our response to Paul Tillich, whose *Systematic Theology* is so recondite and rarified that many trained theologians find it difficult and somewhat lacking in rigorously particular statements of the Christian faith.

In 1930 the late Sir Edwyn Hoskyns concluded an essay, *Mysterium Christi*, a piece of exegetical scholarship, with the following words: "The New Testament scholar . . . cannot patiently permit the dogmatist or the philosopher to expound the doctrine of the Incarnation on the basis of an analysis of human nature illustrated by the humanity of Jesus. . . . The New Testament scholar . . . has the right to demand that the Christian dogmatist should start from this particular revelation, and that the philosopher should at some point or other in his philosophy make sense of it. . . ."

What Sir Edwyn seems to infer is that the New Testament contains three distinguishable thought-forms, namely philosophy, Christian theology,

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and Christology. That they range all the way from universal to particular statements, and that for the Christian Christology must hold the sovereign place.

No other theologian of the twentieth century has assigned this sovereignty to Christology as has Karl Barth. To this theme he has dedicated his life work, the great *Church Dogmatics*. Tirelessly he has expounded the great themes of theology: revelation, the relation of time to eternity, sin and evil, and the predestination of man. For Barth all of these problems are in the end Christocentric, and must be seen in terms of Christ who in his very concreteness is God's word spoken to man. For Barth all problems of evil boil down to the concrete case of what Judas Iscariot did to Christ. In the end all instances of evil come down to the betrayal and rejection of Christ.

Barth is always the champion of the concrete against the abstract or the merely possible. In his doctrine of election, which is an original departure from St. Augustine and Calvin, he rejects all theories which would draw attention away from Christ. For only through Christ, the chosen one, God's choice of the sinner is concrete. For Barth the doctrine of predestination is a doctrine of light, not of darkness. Though Barth is by tradition and temperament a passionate Protestant, there are many prominent Roman Catholics<sup>1</sup> who seem to have understood him at least as well, if not better, than his fellow Protestants. For Barth's *Church Dogmatics* cannot be seen only in the light of intellectual achievement but in the light of Christocentric self-discipline, which shows a kinship with some of the great Catholic teachers of spiritual life.

In the very latest volume of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* IV, 2, this kinship with some of the great Catholic teachers of spiritual life is very much in evidence. This volume deals with the doctrine of Sanctification. Barth says in his Preface that the whole volume might be seen in the light of an evangelical answer to the Roman Catholic dogma of Mary.

It is impossible to deal in a few hundred words with the 982 pages of this volume. But I would like to draw attention to a few important statements which are contained in the third part of this volume under the heading of "Man's Sanctification." As in his anthropology (III, 2), Barth endorses the Christological thesis by emphasizing that true humanity is known to man only in and through Jesus Christ. In Christ we participate in that

<sup>1</sup> E.g., von Balthasar, Hans Urs, *Karl Barth: Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie*, 1951.

wherein Christ is so unlike us—in his fellowship with God and in his obedience to God. In the same way, sainthood is created in and through Jesus Christ. Men become saints through Christ's directive; and the children of God, which Barth also calls the sanctified people or the saints, are directed into a new situation of freedom in Christ.

The saints are disturbed sinners; all other human beings are undisturbed sinners. As disturbed sinners the saints are still sinners—slothful, foolish, inhuman, dissolute and fearful—but as disturbed sinners they can no longer be satisfied with themselves. Through Christ's directive a limit has been set to their existence. Their lives as undisturbed sinful human beings has been radically questioned. In following Christ's directive they are granted the freedom to live for God and their brethren. The saints are men who, though still prisoners of sin, already enjoy freedom. Their sinfulness and imprisonment is a thing of the past, their freedom is a thing of the future. God sanctifies the world through his community of saints who, in spite of their still existing sinfulness, are free to serve God with all their being. Jesus Christ is the ground of men's sanctification. Their returning to God is comprised in Him; these men are reborn. Their old man died in Christ's death on the cross, and they rose as new men in his resurrection.

Barth's thought has not only been misrepresented, it has shocked many people. He has been accused of opening up the gap between God and man, of annihilating man's efforts and of encouraging man's moral inertia and hopelessness. But we should not forget that confession to him has always meant living confession, and that to quote his own words: "If you believe, you are challenged to pay in person. . . . That is the crucial point."

## Book Reviews

**An Historian's Approach to Religion.** By ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956. ix-318 pp. \$5.00.

The "living generation in the Western world" is insistently troubled by the question, "What is our attitude towards religion?" "We have been reminded of Religion by the quickening touch of Adversity; and this common experience is a serious call for a candid inquiry into the meaning of the glimpse of Reality that each of us obtains in the course of following this or that walk of life." So begins Dr. Arnold Toynbee's latest book, *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, in which the philosopher-historian formulates the "glimpse of Reality" which his encyclopedic learning and far-ranging scholarship have enabled him to see.

Based upon the two series of Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1952 and 1953, *An Historian's Approach to Religion* is a summary of Dr. Toynbee's thinking, rather than an addition to his philosophy. This new book "necessarily re-traverses some of the ground covered in *A Study of History*," but most readers will find it a fresh and cogent presentation of Dr. Toynbee's basic views. *An Historian's Approach to Religion* falls into two distinct and equal parts—the first, a natural history of the evolution of the world's higher religions; the second, an analysis and diagnosis of the role played by religion in the modern Western world.

Beneath the "bewildering infinite variety" of religions practiced by man in his long history, Dr. Toynbee detects certain basic uniformities. During the "hundreds of thousands of years" when man was passing "out of a purely passive food-gathering stage of winning his livelihood into a comparatively active hunting and fishing stage," he worshiped Nature gods. But about three thousand years ago, "having reached a stage in his history at which he is no longer willing to worship Nature because he fancies that he has subjugated her," he turned to "Man-worship," to local divinities who represented "one's own collective human power, as embodied in a parochial community and organized in a parochial state." But "parochial-community-worship" led inevitably to war; the rival gods were jealous masters. Out of these warring parochial states there emerged, from time to time, world empires bringing order and peace, and man turned naturally from his local deities to the "idolization of the oecumenical community." But as the empires spread and their rulers became increasingly remote from their subjects, it was very hard "to secure sufficient devotion . . . for the empire as an object of worship . . . , whether in the chillingly impersonal form of worship in itself or in the unedifying personal form of a deified emperor."

Then, and only then, has the world seen the "epiphany of the higher religions," which renounce not only Nature-worship but also Man-worship and turn "towards an Absolute Reality that is beyond, as well as in, both Man and Nature." There are seven of these higher religions extant in the world—Hinayana Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism. Each has a similar history, Toynbee asserts—first, a battle with the oecumenical state; then a modified acceptance of the new religion by the state, with a consequent diversion of religion to meet secular needs; a process of refrigeration and sterilization as each religion tries to appeal to the intellectuals by adopting their philosophy and building

a theology; and finally the "arch-sin" of making religious institutions themselves an idol and of asserting "self-idolizing claims to uniqueness and finality."

At this point most civilizations have broken down. In the Western world, the failure of Christianity in late Roman times to keep itself unspotted and pure from the world, the flesh, and the devil meant that the whole process had to begin anew. In general, Toynbee finds in the history of modern European civilization an illustration of his general pattern, and he feels that the warring of our "parochial" states is leading inevitably to a new world empire, which, like the Roman state, will guarantee peace and security at the price of liberty.

But it is not necessary, Dr. Toynbee adds, that the whole cycle be played through again to its tragic conclusion. Though the coming world empire is sure to be absolute and autocratic, even it must make concessions to the "intractable vein" in human nature—"akin to the temperament of Man's yoke-fellows the camel, mule and goat"—which insists upon a minimum of freedom. "Mankind," Toynbee predicts, "would seek compensation for the loss of much of its political, economic, and perhaps even domestic freedom by putting more of its treasure into spiritual freedom," and the public authorities may tolerate this revival of religion as "harmless." This time higher religion may escape the pitfalls in which it has hitherto been trapped. In a world so intimately linked by airplane and radio there is neither cause nor room for parochialism. The seven extant higher religions will have the opportunity to scrap their self-centeredness, their peculiar myths, their special theologies, and to concentrate upon "essential counsels and truths." "A time may come," Toynbee hopes, "when the local heritages of the different historic nations, civilizations, and religions will have coalesced into a common heritage of the whole human family." That time is not yet, but "We are perhaps within sight of this possibility. . . ."

From even so skimpy a summary it should be clear that *An Historian's Approach to Religion* is one of the most provocative books of our time and a challenge to every thinking man. It is not an easy book to read, for Dr. Toynbee has resorted to a kind of shorthand writing, using without explanation terms like "third generation empires" previously defined in great detail in his *Study of History*. Nor does Toynbee aid his readers by supplying illustrations or proofs for his sweeping generalizations; his chapters are written in an abstract, condensed, and heavily Germanic style, and they are not materially aided by the eight "annexes" into which he has poured, without comment or interpretation, a mass of quotations presumably intended to bolster his case.

These considerations, though likely to discourage Toynbee's readers, do not materially weaken his argument, which deserves the most careful thought and study. Challenging as it is, Toynbee's thesis is subject to certain grave reservations. Though asserting that he is not presenting his personal views but "the glimpse of the Universe that his fellow-historians and he are able to catch from the point of view at which they arrive through following the historian's professional path," Dr. Toynbee, in fact, speaks for no considerable body of professional historical opinion, and his views are highly idiosyncratic. Dr. Toynbee is not really a professional historian; the careful and conscientious examination of all the evidence bearing upon a unique historical phenomenon—the primary concern of the true historian—is not to his liking. Specialists in many of the fields through which Toynbee sweeps so briskly have objected to his use of sources and to his generalizations which go far beyond his evidences.

Dr. Toynbee is a taxonomist of cultures. Yet, though he shares many of the preconceptions of the social scientist, his view of his task is oddly old-fashioned; he



shows no acquaintance with the enormous body of anthropological work upon primitive religions and no knowledge of sociological studies of religion in contemporary life. For all the obvious differences between the two men, Toynbee is intellectually akin to Herbert Spencer, who also attempted elaborate, but now discredited, comparative analyses of social institutions, to create a "synthetic philosophy" of cosmic proportions.

If Dr. Toynbee's approach to history is individual, his view of religion is also unique. A good many pious people in England and America have perhaps become unduly enthusiastic because a man of Toynbee's stature has pronounced religion a Good Thing. They should be warned that Toynbee's approach is definitely not a Christian view. For him all higher religions are about equally excellent—and limited. The Christian view of Jesus as the Son of God and the sole Savior of Mankind he regards as an example of "parochialism" and "self-centeredness"; indeed, he terms it "megalomania" to believe that God could have revealed himself to one particular people at one particular time in this unique way. When Toynbee proposes to strip religion of its "non-essentials," he does not mean to abandon merely incense and vestments and rituals but to scrap all theology and all "myths"—among which he lists belief that Christ was God's only begotten son.

In short, despite Toynbee's disclaimer, *An Historian's Approach to Religion* is not truly a lesson drawn from history but an exposition of the personal creed of its author. On October 13, 1953, when Toynbee made "a long-meditated pilgrimage to the Sacro Speco, . . . where Saint Benedict is traditionally believed to have spent his years of spiritual travail as an anchorite," he appears to have experienced a sort of mystical experience, revealing that a new, synthetic religion might be man's salvation. *An Historian's Approach to Religion* is a peculiarly personal expression of its author's belief and of his prayer "that the spirit which had once created a Western Christian Civilization out of the chaos of the Dark Age might return to re-consecrate a latterday Westernizing World."

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**Christian Social Ethics: Exerting Christian Influence.** By ALBERT TERRILL RASMUSSEN. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1956. xiii-318 pp. \$4.00.

Albert T. Rasmussen is Professor of Social Ethics and Sociology of Religion at Colgate Rochester Divinity School. In the present volume he has gone a long way toward filling the tremendous need for a discussion of Christian social ethics which bridges the gap between what we may call neo-Protestant theology and sociology.

This book is, in the words of the author, "a study of the problem of what the Christian response should be toward the enormous pressures and intimidations of the world" (p. v). Its mood is that of "appreciative realism," recognizing both the accomplishment of the churches and their failure to provide a faithful social witness before the world.

Professor Rasmussen follows the general interpretation of Christian ethics represented by Paul Lehmann, Alexander Miller, H. Richard Niebuhr, and Daniel Day Williams (p. 162). He accepts Richard Niebuhr's conversionist type of ethics as the most satisfactory of the five conceptions of the relationship of Christ to culture

which Professor Niebuhr has analyzed in *Christ and Culture*. He agrees with Williams' general criticism of Reinhold Niebuhr's ethical position as focusing too exclusively upon the judgment under which all of man's conduct stands and too little upon the new possibilities of love and reconciliation which are available through faith by grace.

The concept of "compromise" plays an important role in Professor Rasmussen's thinking. One of the major factors contributing to the actual weakness of the church, he believes, is the general failure of Christians to understand "the unavoidableness, yet the dangerousness, of compromise" (p. vi), which he defines as an "arbitrated" or "adjustive" decision (pp. 150, 155). Compromise is necessary in order to avoid withdrawal on the one hand and an uncritical acceptance of convention on the other. Christian ethics, the author argues, undertakes to resolve the dilemma of compromise (although the tension between God's perfect will and actual human decisions is never overcome) by calling man to "dynamic responsiveness to God in community" (p. 163). Christian ethics is neither an ethic of rational principles nor one of pragmatic expediency; rather, it is an ethic of absolute loyalty to God in the context of community. It is relational through and through. In view of this understanding of Christian ethics, Rasmussen's usage of the term *compromise* is confusing, for it reflects an implicitly legalistic frame of reference which is clearly not intended.

The difficulty with Professor Rasmussen's usage of the term *compromise* becomes clearer when we examine his discussion of the relation of Christian ethics to law. Thus he describes "two somewhat different views being discussed currently concerning the Christian approach to group decision" (p. 192). The first, represented by John Bennett, begins with general principles and proceeds to middle axioms and then to specific situations. The second, represented either explicitly or implicitly in the work of Lehmann, Miller, Williams, and H. R. Niebuhr, begins with "a response to God within concrete situations, rather than from such absolute principles." Rasmussen dismisses the former approach much too easily. He fails to develop its strength and the criticism which it offers of the second approach. He makes the dichotomy between the two positions too sharp, for the so-called "contextual" ethicists must have certain basic principles which they bring to the situation, in terms of which they can understand what absolute loyalty to God requires. Rasmussen recognizes the necessity of such principles (p. 170), but he fails to do justice to them in his analysis.

When the author declares that "the Christian ethic is indicative rather than imperative" (p. 170), he underrates the normative element in the gospel. While it is true that the Christian "gives primary attention to what is" in the sense that he approaches the moral life with an effort to understand what God is doing, it is also true that the "divine indicative" concerning God's action in itself presents man with a "divine imperative," showing him how he ought to respond to God's activity. In rejecting the *principle* approach to Christian ethics, Professor Rasmussen also rejects the view that love is a commandment. It is "more accurate to say that a Christian lives under a loyalty or commitment rather than a commandment." "A command to love is about as fruitless an injunction as can be conceived" (p. 164).

One wonders what the significance of Jesus' summation of the law in the two commandments is for the author. Surely, these commandments have normative value; they go to the heart of the divine will and place all man's action in direct relationship to that will. But in order to resolve the issue which the author has raised concerning love and law, more attention needs to be given to the different kinds of love (*agape*,

*eros, philia*), and the discussion needs to be placed in a broader context. For example, Emil Brunner's *The Divine Imperative* is not even mentioned. Similarly, the discussion would gain greatly in depth if some attention were given to the historical background of the present debate, especially in terms of Paul, Luther, and Calvin.

Turning to Professor Rasmussen's analysis of the nature of Christian influence, the pressures in society which make it difficult for this influence to be effective, and specific steps in building a church of influence, one is impressed both with the author's "realism" and with his sensitiveness to the possibilities of actual situations. These sections of the book are excellent, and they constitute the major portion of the volume.

The author distinguishes sharply between power and influence. The former, he declares, rests ultimately upon latent force; the latter works only by persuasion. A church has no power "unless it can enter power relations with unified strength"; and it has little influence "unless its moral perspectives are carried by its members out into the organizational decisions in which they participate, or unless it makes a unified impact on public opinion through effective channels of communication" (p. 118). To put the matter another way, the church that would exert Christian influence must be both the initiator and the "cooperator" in community action, originating projects of improvement and mobilizing all interested people from many groups to attain the desired results (p. 219). Whether the church exercises power or influence, a Christian consensus is needed, and one of the most pressing problems relating to Christian social action is that of finding effective channels through which such a consensus may be reached. Groups designed to constitute such channels need a strong representation of dedicated laymen, both because their counsel is essential in order to provide a realistic understanding of the problems and the issues involved and because the primary Christian influence must be carried out into the world by laymen (p. 115).

Separate chapters are devoted to the general areas of race relations, the economic life, and the political order. There is no special treatment of the family or juvenile delinquency. Considerable attention is given to specific suggestions for social action in general and also for methods of dealing with particular problems. Each chapter contains a group of questions for discussion and a valuable list of recommended readings, drawn exclusively, however, from the contemporary field (since 1942). Special attention is given to resources for keeping abreast of current thinking and action in the various fields to which particular attention is given.

Although it needs to be supplemented by other discussions of theological ethics in particular, *Christian Social Ethics* is an excellent book for seminary use and should have wide appeal for parish ministers and thoughtful laymen who are looking for fresh, practical guidance in the field of the social responsibility of the church as well as for a provocative discussion of some of the related theological issues. It should be an effective aid in meeting "the growing gap between clergy and laity" (p. 113).

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**The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards, From His Private Notebooks.** Ed. by HARVEY G. TOWNSEND. (University of Oregon Monographs, Studies in Philosophy No. 2.) Eugene, Oregon: The University Press, 1955. xxii-270 pp. \$5.00 (cl.); \$3.50 (pap.).

There are at least three ways of reviewing a book such as the one at hand. One

could, in the first place, write an interpretive essay on the chief subject of the book—as Macaulay was wont to do—in this case perhaps using the editor's Introduction as a point of departure. The present situation, however, calls for something more modest. Professor Townsend was, to be sure, a significant interpreter of Edwards, but the chief exposition of his views was published in his *Philosophical Ideas in the United States* (New York, 1934) which is not here under review.

In the present edition, the great bulk of the Introduction is taken up with a discussion of the materials being published, their origins, nature, publication history, etc. What is said on a purely philosophical level is, for the most part, unexceptionable. He emphasizes the importance of Locke and Newton to Edwards' thinking. He discounts the allegation that in order to have arrived at his particular type of idealism, Edwards must have seen the writings of Bishop Berkeley. He emphasizes the importance of the long Christian Platonic tradition running from Augustine to Cudworth and insists that this, together with Locke and Newton, was all Edwards' transcendently great genius required. Subsequent scholarship (Professor Townsend died in December, 1948, and his manuscript is now published after various delays under the direction of George N. Belknap) has, in general, underlined these same conclusions. Whether or not this Introduction has gone overboard on Edwards' rationalism is a question that will be taken up below in another connection.

A second type of review would involve a consideration of the strictly technical or textual aspects of this edition. But the arduous preliminary labor required for a proper performance of this task is presumably not expected of me now. Suffice it to say, then, that we have in the volume at hand about one tenth of the million-odd words in the Miscellanies and that about 75 per cent of this tenth is now published for the first time. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation have been modernized but the wording has not been "improved" as it was by some previous editors, notably Sereno E. Dwight. Professor Townsend was a devoted Edwards scholar and we may assume that he did his best to be faithful to the original text. Comparison with Edwards' already published writings reveals no evidence that this version is philosophically tendentious or that the general sense of Edwards' thought is distorted.

There is, however, a further reason for my not attempting a more detailed textual analysis: Professor Thomas A. Schafer of Duke University is now at work on a critical edition of the full Miscellanies. He is, therefore, one of the few persons qualified to make such judgments and in his own volumes he will, no doubt, comment on previous publications from the manuscripts. (It may be of interest in this connection that Professor Schafer's work is part of a project to publish Edwards' Complete Works. Professor Perry Miller of Harvard University is chairman of the editorial board, the Bollingen Foundation is providing financial assistance, and the Yale University Press will soon publish the first volume.)

We are brought thus to a third type of review, *viz.*, a brief characterization of the book with a few comments on its quality and value. The title expresses the facts of the case: Professor Townsend presents a winnowing of Edwards' manuscript legacy in which the nonphilosophical materials are regarded as chaff. This book, he says, was prepared to fill the "need of a condensed and faithful report of Edwards, the thinker." (For "thinker" we ought perhaps to read "metaphysician.") Townsend later continues: "The present volume is intended to make available, mainly from unpublished material, a coherent body of the philosophical opinions of Edwards to supplement the works already accessible in the standard editions."

This material can be divided into three sections. First, about twenty pages of published text, entitled "Of Being," are taken from a composite youthful manuscript published by Dwight in 1829 under the title "Notes on Natural Science." This has been compared with the manuscript in order to eliminate Dwight's "corrections." Second, about fifty pages are a republication of "The Mind" from the Dwight edition, except that its subdivisions are now printed in the order indicated by numbers generally attributed to Edwards rather than according to Dwight's conception of unity and coherence. (In this instance the manuscript is lost.) Third, 195 pages are quarried from the vast manuscript notebooks which Edwards kept from 1722 to the end of his life. Here Townsend utilized Edwards' own index and arranged the separate entries by topic (Free Will, God's Nature, Happiness, etc.) and under each topic chronologically. His principles of selection were relevancy and purity. "Relevancy means relevant to the exhibition of Edwards' philosophy. . . . Purity means . . . relatively free from extraneous matter." Subjective factors have undoubtedly entered into this selection; it could not be otherwise. Dependence on Edwards' outline could easily have occasioned certain omissions. But since these shortcomings are probably minimal, we are fortunate to have in one volume this large collection of philosophical writing which has heretofore lain unread in the Yale University archives.

Nor is this simply antiquarianism. Edwards was, after all, the greatest metaphysician in American history down to the age of Peirce and Royce, the equal of any in Western civilization during his day, and probably the most important in the entire history of what we might call "strict Calvinism." It may be that these facts argue the need for the *complete* text; but it is still no little matter to have at hand the means to clarify our knowledge of Edwards' idealism. Since he did not erect a logic-tight wall of separation between theology and metaphysics, we can also improve our understanding of his more philosophic theological treatises (notably those on the Freedom of the Will, Original Sin, True Virtue, and the End for which God Created the World). I am not prepared at the present time to point to a single basic change in interpretation that this publication requires us to make. Neither does Townsend, except perhaps to emphasize the Platonic elements in Edwards' thought. But this book will, nevertheless, probably retain much of its usefulness even after a critical edition of the complete Miscellanies has been published.

The exclusive emphasis of this book, on the other hand, can have certain mischievous effects; and four short quotations from Townsend's own Introduction (pp. viii-ix) will serve to illustrate the kind of generalizations to which a one-sided "philosophic" reading of Edwards can lead:

"Rationalism is not the whole of Edward's [*sic*] philosophy but it is the basis of it." "Edwards' attempt to understand man resulted in making man a subordinate part of the rational order." "It is a grim view of human life, fraught [*sic*] with labor, discipline, and tragedy. Its truth alone could commend it." "The contemplation of the tragic character of life, however, did not in fact lead him to despair; for, like Spinoza, he found a promise of salvation in the knowledge of a joyful participation in the rational order."

What we face here is not error but incompleteness. The reader almost needs a reminder that he is not learning about some Roman Stoic but a leader of America's first celebrated evangelical Awakening and a man who, in a single numbered item of the Miscellanies, devoted almost as much space as is represented by Townsend's

entire collection to a discussion of Types of the Messiah! The fact is that from the vantage-point provided by the history of philosophy one may gain only a very incomplete view of Edwards' system of thought.

The volume is helpfully annotated. A numerical table lists all entries included in the volume and gives the page on which they can be found. Professor Townsend's death prevented his completing the index, however, and it was decided to publish the book without one. This is a pity. Who, for example, would expect to find two important entries on the Ministry under the topic "Liberty of Conscience," or an important argument on the Trinity not under the topic "Trinity" but under "Spiritual Knowledge"? An index of names mentioned would also have been useful.

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**The Existentialists and God.** By ARTHUR C. COCHRANE. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956. 174 pp. \$3.00.

This compact little volume is a brilliantly lucid exposition of the basic philosophical and theological concepts of the thinkers listed in the subtitle: "*Being and the being of God in the thought of Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Tillich, Étienne Gilson, Karl Barth.*" Its chief purpose, however, is to exhibit the contrast between the theology of Karl Barth and the thought of the contemporary existentialists (for which the chapter on Kierkegaard serves as background). Indeed, it is essentially a study in Barth's criticism of existentialism.

Professor Cochrane has written the study in the conviction that the problem of the being of God is central in the theology of our time. It is posed by the assumption of the existentialists that the nature of being (and therefore of God) can be determined by critical analysis quite apart from Christian revelation. In the case of an existentialist like Tillich, who is deeply concerned with Christian truth, this means that he deals with the doctrine of the being of God in terms of his fundamental ontological analysis rather than in terms of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Indeed, for such a theology, the importance of Jesus Christ becomes consequent and secondary, not decisive and primary. It is not Jesus Christ who determines the norm of meaning for Tillich's theology, but his ontology which determines even the alleged normative significance of Jesus as the Christ.

There can be no question but that the issue with which Professor Cochrane is here concerned is basic. Tillich himself dealt with the issue with classic clearness and simplicity in his little book, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (1955). There Tillich expounds his view that a real synthesis of the ontological and biblical concerns is possible. Professor Cochrane, on the other hand, follows Barth closely in insisting that no reconciliation between the two points of view is possible. Either being-in-general is the key to the meaning of God, or God's act in Jesus Christ is the key. In the one case we have an indeterminate blending of being and nonbeing; in the other, we have the understanding of God as the Being who seeks his human creatures in fellowship.

For the contemporary existentialists, being is unintelligible apart from the experience of non-being or Nothing. For Jaspers it is in the experience of nothingness in the limit-situations of life that faith arises to affirm being. For Heidegger it is in anxiety that we apprehend being through non-being. For Sartre it is in freedom that



we give our existence meaning out of the vast context of nothingness. For Tillich non-being is the reality which threatens our existence and is itself rooted in Being-itself (God).

Barth's critique of these philosophies is searching, though he, too, leaves critical questions unanswered. The very fact, he holds, that each of these existentialists sees the knowledge of non-being as *natural*, and salvation from its threat as our human possibility, shows how shallow and unrealistic their understanding is. The real *nothing* is apartness from and opposition to God. Anxiety is not the natural knowledge of non-being; it is demonic, and ingratitude to God. Barth is surely right in marking anxiety as, in a profound sense, lack of trust in God and therefore ingratitude to him, but does this mean that the existentialist analysis does not help us in the understanding of the condition of *unbelief*? To be sure, such analysis does not of itself bring us to faith, but it *may* bring an initial awareness of a condition to which the gospel may actually speak.

Again, it may be asked whether Barth's refusal to speculate on the origin of the Nihil does not itself grow out of the speculation that the Nihil does not rise out of the freedom of the creature. Surely it does not help very much to speak of the Nihil as known only in Jesus Christ, and then define it simply as "what God does not will, does not affirm and does not create." If the Nihil has any meaning at all, it must root either in the being of God or in the very nature of created existence. Why can't non-being be regarded simply as a philosophical designation for the Holiness of God, which is not only the limiting reality for all finite existence but the awful negation of the personal creature who refuses to acknowledge the Lordship of God? Surely the Church can never forsake the conviction that Jesus Christ is the decisive key to the meaning of God's being; but this can be acknowledged without negating the fruitfulness for Christian faith of philosophic analyses wherever they may indeed be fruitful.

This is an important book, useful as an introduction to some of the most influential thinkers of our time and, even more, as a sharpening of the issue posed by the use of existentialist ontologies in current Christian thought.

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**Faith, Reason, and Existence.** By JOHN A. HUTCHISON. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956. xi-306 pp. \$4.50.

The title of this volume clearly indicates the author's intent: to deal with religious problems in contemporary Western Christian terms, necessitated by what he calls the "Copernican revolution" wrought in religious thinking by Barth, the Niebuhrs, Tillich, *et al.* Thus, though the standard philosophy-of-religion topics like the problem of evil, proofs of God's existence, the competence of human reason, free will, etc., are here, they are dealt with in new ways and under different headings: "Symbols, Language, and Faith," "Faith, Revelation, and God," "The Significance of Rational Theology," "History and Biblical Faith"—a refreshing change. (Curiously, immortality never makes the grade. Not currently interesting?)

But the title tells us more. It is theological and Christian rather than philosophically universal. We are to deal with faith's relation to reason, and the relation of both these to existence—all very modish theologically. This intimates, and rightly, that the author here makes no pretense of dispassionate rationality but deals with

(Christian) religion from the thick of the contemporary religious and existential struggle. Indeed he often insists that *every* viewpoint uses basic faith-assumptions, declared or undeclared, and does not exempt himself. His hope therefore is not so much to construct a full-scale philosophical system as to deal existentially (i.e., in a Western Christian context) with the pressing religious problems of the man of Christian faith—though he is at pains to orient his effort to every possible aspect of human life, thought, and culture.

With this attempt to indicate the relevance of religion to the widest possible range of human interests, even the ostensibly un- and ir-religious, I am heartily in sympathy. That most non-Christian religions were substantially left out, I regret. It does raise the question of the adequacy of coverage. Some men, movements, and ideas are mentioned so casually as to make comments about them cryptic; between others, and between some parts of the book, the interrelations are implicit rather than explicit. This leads also sometimes to a facility of generalization or conclusion which I am sure is foreign to the undogmatic temper of the author. Thus I felt that the warfare between science and religion was concluded a bit too soon; the nature of "the biblical religion" was left undefined and its unity assumed; the relation between faith and reason not fully explicated; the nature of valid evidence for God's existence (or is there any?) not clearly specified.

But the deeper difficulty is about the author's ruling attitude. As the theological title suggests, this is more of a confessional rationalization of the Christian faith than a description of religious phenomena or an attempt rationally to establish, say, a theistic conclusion, such as the subtitle "An Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy of Religion" might indicate.

To be sure philosophical movements are considered at length, and "mere faith" is rejected in the interests of a faithful reason or a reasonable faith. The author speaks frequently of the dangers of irrational dogmatism, false absolutes, and religious literalism. Yet Professor Hutchison has his own orthodoxy, termed "religion in the biblical tradition," which from its frequent usage appears to be the touchstone of all religious truth and validity. He distrusts merely intellectual proofs of God's existence as unimportant (totally discounting their hope of a rational, hence universal, demonstration) or calls them only disguised confessions of faith. And he writes with apparent approval: "The attitude which is appropriate toward a revealing event is not that of argument or rational demonstration (such an attitude has more than once betrayed religious thought into false conclusions!) but one of confession." (p. 118.)

Something of this theological-philosophical ambivalence is evident at other points. A good symbol is one which is "internally consistent and adequate to facts" and we choose those which present themselves "forcefully" to us. Which facts, and with what force for *both* Buddhist and Christian? Is there no hope at all for even limitedly escaping confessional subjectivity?

Or again, of the ontological argument. "The ontological argument does not appear in Greek thought," but represents the impact of the Hebrew transcendent-immanent God-idea on Western philosophy. Historically the argument rests on the principle that necessity of thought implies necessity (and reality) of being, and it has usually been related to Platonic (and later) idealism, rather than to Hebraic religio-realism. Must this argument be called Hebrew-Christian because it is the best and fundamental one for the author?

In conclusion: Some of my difficulty is with the biblical-theological viewpoint of the author. But more is with the difficulty inherent in writing a philosophy of religion at all. The problem is how to be confessionally religious and rationally philosophical all at once. Does one proceed, now on a theological leg, then a philosophical one? Or is it impossible—even though necessary? Indeed Professor Hutchison is to be complimented both for the attempt to make a new synthesis of these elements for our time, and for the balance and illumination he has brought to this perennially needful task.

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**Christian Perfection and American Methodism.** By JOHN LELAND PETERS.  
New York: Abingdon Press, 1956. 252 pp. \$4.00.

Insisting that the intent of his work is "primarily" historical, Peters thoroughly re-examines the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection (as pragmatically formulated), and then studies the treatment accorded this doctrinal emphasis in nineteenth-century American Methodism. Peters discerns in Wesley a distinction between two integral aspects of the experience of entire sanctification, perfection-in-love: the initial purification, and the subsequent maturation. Both emphases are essential to the Wesleyan view, and the utilization of this fact in the comparative evaluation of subsequent authors is a real contribution to analytical clarity. (Incidentally, the problem of depth and consistency in Wesley's doctrine of sin is examined, although somewhat apologetically, at several points in the discussion.)

Such a study, of course, brings one to the very *raison d'être* of the Holiness controversies which so characterized American Methodism in the late nineteenth century and which so affected popular thinking with respect to the possibilities and methodology of an entire sanctification. One becomes aware of the gathering storm as the advocates of a "second blessing" increasingly insisted on the indispensability (for salvation) of a publicly attested experience of entire sanctification. Such an insistence, of course, revealed "a growing particularization" in the manner of presenting the Wesleyan doctrine. The clash with other views of Christian growth, the struggle to avoid sectarian divisiveness, the counterplay of extreme emphasis, indifference, and reaction, and the eventual separation of the organized Holiness movement from integral association with organized Methodism in America—all such developments receive a precise and balanced treatment in Peters' book.

In the concluding chapter Peters re-evaluates the Wesleyan doctrine in terms of the *essential* relevance of such an insistence on the real possibility of purity-maturity in "the grace-empowered response of man to the extended love of God for man." This discussion, though brief, is quite provocative.

Included in Peters' study are references to contextual influences which influenced the practical statement and transmission of the doctrine. On this phase of his discussion some comments must be made. His stress, for instance, on the contribution of "living witnesses" to Wesley's doctrinal formulations is quite clear, and consistent with the connotations of experiential crisis associated with the Wesleyan affirmation that one could receive a conscious fullness of responsive love even in this life. On the other hand, "the sacramental element in Wesley's own formulation of the doctrine," while referred to as having determinative significance, is not elaborated or integrated sufficiently in Peters' study to communicate effectively to the reader; too much, on

this point, is left to implication and corollary studies. Moreover, I seriously question the conclusion on pp. 188 f. which suggests that it was the coincidental absence of a "sacramental setting" and the presence of "a stubborn wilderness environment" which occasioned the neglect of the promulgation of Christian perfection. (Indeed, some of those who are credited with aiding in the "revival" of the doctrine in the 1840's were themselves functioning in a "frontier" environment!)

The most profound relevance of the study lies in the supporting role it plays to the current ecumenical task of re-evaluating diverse Christian traditions with a view to a new wholeness of perspective. Indeed, Peters' work would have been even more resource-full if it had included something of the subsequent developments in the major Holiness "sects"—e.g., in the case of the Church of the Nazarene. The historical notes on pp. 148 ff. simply do not seem adequate for the purposes of understanding the ultimate outcome of the doctrine of Christian perfection in American Wesleyanism. It is precisely at this point that Peters could make a real contribution, one which is not made in this book though it could be developed on the basis of his background studies: Could it be that Methodism, by virtue of a recovery of its doctrine of the gracious possibility of an experienced fullness of Love, might provide a "bridge" through which the contemporary Ecumenical Movement could engage in mutually significant communication with the many Pentecostal and Holiness groups with regard to the realities and sources of Christian experience?

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**Education for Christian Living.** By RANDOLPH CRUMP MILLER. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956. xiv-418 pp. \$6.50.

Books such as this reflect and prophesy a new understanding of Christian education. "Education for Christian Living" as a title has an appeal to the pragmatist who insists upon the resultant—upon procedures that work. The author himself bears out another and deeper theme. Would that the book were named, "Education *into* Christian Living," for such is apparently the author's philosophy. Education into Christian faith means one is living the Christian life "within the community now, for education is life and not just a means to it" (pp. 165-166). This reviewer subscribes to such a view, and revels in the revelatory and sometimes revolutionary ideas expressed in Dr. Miller's book.

The book gives no little consideration to methods and mechanisms, but unlike many writers the author does not glorify them or make them synonyms for Christian education. Christian education is basically theological, and one who conceives it to be methodological is destroying the very cause which he espouses. The book does not identify Christian education with teaching theology or with effective techniques. "A relevant theology stands in the background as a guide to the whole process" (p. 369) and "under- or over-organization may be barriers to the unity that, by God's grace, is possible" (p. 298). This balanced presentation refines and vitalizes the concepts held by the vocational and the avocational Christian educator.

It is thrilling to find emphasis upon Christian teaching, in limitless forms, as the pre-eminent vocation of the laity. Every pastor is essentially a Christian educator and every local church program is indigenous to its community. A new day of education into Christian living comes when the local church creatively, rather than slavishly, uses

its denomination's rich curricular resources. The author's concept of the wholeness of experience puts community endeavors in an appreciative perspective and reveals the significant contribution of the church-related college. The latter is of particular concern to the people called Methodists in the 1956-60 quadrennium.

Dr. Miller gives recognition to the place of camping in Christian education, but leaves the way open for a much more thorough development of the educational philosophy back of this new and important trend. Music is coming into its own in Christian nurture and expression. Perhaps a later volume by this author, or another, will give the development of thought on music which is so immediately needed.

The chapter on worship (so often belittled or made trivial by some educators) is a helpful corrective for all of us. Special days are given good, sound treatment as they are seen as celebrations in the process of Christian growth rather than as interruptions. "A Comprehensive Program of Religious Education" developed on pages 265 to 276 should be read again and again by every worker in any local church's program of Christian education.

Some might quarrel with the author's liberal treatment of a church's choice of curriculum materials. His principle is sound but some of the values of denominational literature are not made clear. Connectionalism has a value and a program which can be expressed only in its own literature. This can be done without becoming sectarian or failing to be ecumenical. Some might get the impression that there is an inter-denominational curriculum prepared by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches. Outlines of lessons are the product of co-operative planning and work of competent persons within the denominations represented in the National Council. These outlines are the commonly agreed-upon framework of curriculum materials, *but* the lessons are prepared by the denominations themselves. The National Council does not produce "Sunday-school lessons."

Although the price of the book seems high, a pastor may well forego two less expensive books and buy this one. It puts into understandable language much that I have endeavored to put into practice in the local pastorate. It is scholarly without being hard reading. The romance of it intrigues one from page to page. It makes a real contribution to the maturing process of Christian education going on in, and through, our churches.

LEON M. ADKINS

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**Studies in the Acts of the Apostles.** By MARTIN DIBELIUS. Ed. by HEINRICH Greeven, trans. by Mary Ling. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956. ix-228 pp. \$4.50.

There are two perspectives from which the Book of Acts may be studied. It may be regarded primarily as a historical writing, delineating the events between the Ascension and Paul's two years of rather free imprisonment in Rome. Then the problem of Acts is essentially a historical problem, consisting of the determination of sources and of the relative probability of events having taken place as described. By and large, this is the approach which has characterized criticism during the last fifty years and more.

In the eleven brilliantly original essays in the book under review, published between 1923 and 1951, when they were collected and published under the title



*Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, Martin Dibelius devoted his rich skills toward shifting the perspective from the historical to the literary-theological point of view. This he does radically and with power, presenting essentially a new look at Acts.

The Dibelius concern is less with event than with account, for he believes that Luke—and he means Luke—writing about A.D. 90, was not so much concerned with what had happened as with what was happening and should happen in his own time. Being the first to draw up such a narrative, in writing Acts he was not constrained to follow precedent as he had to do in writing a Gospel; hence he was free to be fully original and creative. Thus Dibelius believes that by far the larger amount of material in Acts was Luke's own contribution. Written sources were at a minimum. There was no guiding thread, he says, in chapters 1 through 5 nor in 21:17 through 28:31. Chapters 1 through 12 are not based on anything we might call a source. There is some traditional material running through the book, but the interpretations and lines of direction are all provided by Luke and with primary reference to the needs of the Church in his own day. For the travel sections, there was doubtless an itinerary of station-names, sometimes with notes, which Luke used: this, however, in whole or in part, is not to be described as a "we"-source. There was no such source. And in general, discrepancies between historical probability of events and the narratives which relate them are not to be explained out of sources, but out of Luke's literary-theological concerns.

All the speeches in Acts are Luke's own writing. Likewise the fascinating account of the shipwreck is of literary, not historical origin: "True literary criticism will lead us to suppose that the nautical description is taken from the numerous accounts of sea-voyages in literature and not from experience." Since Paul the prisoner could not appropriately make a speech at Rome to parallel the one made in Athens, Luke dresses up the journey by way of compensation. Dibelius also solves the difficult problem of the "Apostolic Council" of chapter 15 by the literary-theological approach: once it is recognized that the chapter has no historical worth, only theological, the historical problem vanishes.

Perhaps the three most brilliant and important essays are "Paul on the Areopagus," "The Conversion of Cornelius," and "The Speeches in Acts and Ancient Historiography." These are unusually original and powerful pieces of argument. With regard to the first of these subjects, it is Dibelius' contention that Paul's appearance in Athens is the first momentous encounter of Christian belief with classical culture. Since Athens was the gateway to wisdom, Luke selects it for this speech and has Paul preach in the way Luke thought the Greeks ought to be preached to at the time: "with philosophical proofs, with comparative acknowledgments to Greek monotheism, and pressing into service the words of wisdom spoken by Greek poets." If Luke was false to Paul in presenting him as a Stoic, he was true to the measure in which the theology of the Ancient Church was based on Stoic rather than on Christian suppositions.

Everywhere Dibelius' insights are fresh, even exciting, and will have to be taken into account in any future study of Acts. It is, of course, premature to abandon the problem of sources; also, evidence to prove or disprove Dibelius' literary-theological conclusions is hard to come by. Perhaps some of his solutions are too easy. Nevertheless, the book is a major contribution to the study of Acts.

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**The Old Testament Since the Reformation.** By EMIL KRAELING. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956. pp. 320. \$5.00.

For those who in theological seminary have labored to learn something of Hebrew, sought to understand the documentary theory of the Pentateuch, and then wondered what relevance the Old Testament has for the practical problems of Christianity today, this book has a wealth of answers. A distinguished Old Testament scholar has raised the question of the authority of the Old Testament in the Christian Church and carefully reported the answers given by leading biblical scholars and theologians from the time of the Reformation down to the present. So fair has Professor Kraeling been in reporting the diverse views of others on the question that it is frequently difficult to tell what is his own view in this lengthy debate. For this restraint the serious student cannot but be grateful, and will be the more anxious to read the author's own carefully weighed answer to what has been called "the greatest inter-Christian debate."

The survey rightly begins with Luther, for whom the real touchstone of authority for the collection of Hebrew writings was whether they preach and treat of Christ or not. The rise of modern critical scholarship in Wellhausen, W. Robertson Smith, and Driver within the Protestant Church he likens to the situation of a hen that has hatched out ducklings and then sees them swimming off where she herself cannot follow. On the one hand scholars like Gunkel frankly abandoned the former supernaturalism and emphasized the moral and spiritual values to be found in the canonical Hebrew writings; on the other, James Orr continued to see the Old Testament as a special supernatural revelation to Israel and as such relevant for Christian theology.

The chapter on Harnack and Delitzsch is an example of the author's fairness. Despite the shocking things which Delitzsch said about the Old Testament, Kraeling does not find his books worthless as is commonly claimed. He did succeed in making his readers conscious of the limitations of the Old Testament. Few German, English, and American theologians and biblical scholars who have written on the place of the Old Testament in the Christian Church have escaped the notice of Kraeling in this survey. In the twenty-five pages of notes at the end of the volume the author has given not only an annotated bibliography which will long remain standard on the subject, but also a Who's Who of theologians and biblical critics.

From the rich fabric of opinion which emerges from this careful survey the reader gets the impression that the question of the authority of the Old Testament for the Christian Church is far from being settled and that the gulf between historical biblical studies and dogmatic theology is not yet successfully bridged. "If the biblical scholar," says Kraeling, "weary of struggling with rocks and underbrush, wants to get out of the narrow ravine up which he has been toiling and gain the high plateau, where the systematic theologian paces about, scanning broad horizons, he is free to do so. . . . But the biblico-theological task itself can be greatly enriched by legitimate historical means. . . . There is room, furthermore, for two standpoints—one establishing distance and another proximity."

When Professor Kraeling gives us the volume on the place of the Old Testament in the early Christian Church, which he promises in his Introduction, we shall be immeasurably in his debt for an authoritative treatment of a problem which must concern every teacher and student of the Hebrew Scriptures.

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**The Prophets—Pioneers to Christianity.** By WALTER G. WILLIAMS. New York: Abingdon Press, 1956. 223 pp. \$3.50.

Protestants have always been proud of their prophetic tradition, and in Dr. Williams' book they are again reminded of the richness of this tradition. Writing in a pleasing style that is appealing to both scholar and layman, the writer traces the development of prophecy and its influence upon the more significant religious concepts of Judaism and Christianity. Refusing to acknowledge the existence of a unified theology, he does find a degree of unity within the Old Testament that has been imposed by an editing for canonization and by a common search of all prophets for the basic truths of human existence.

Dr. Williams is well aware of the importance of archeology and ancient history, using them frequently to stress the dependence of Jewish religious thought upon other contemporary cultures. This dependence, however, should never obscure the fact that it was the prophets who pioneered in promulgating the great ideals and principles that have been the foundations of all Christian thought. And of these men five in particular—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—are singled out as deserving special comment.

Not as amateurs exercising special self-appointed tasks of revealing the divine will but as members of a recognized profession, the prophets uttered their great truths with a confidence that came from knowing that God spoke through them. They were well qualified for their work. Called to office by a profound religious experience which expressed itself in a vision of some sort, they were men of marked abilities, able to read and write as is evidenced by the records which they kept. Endowed with some poetical ability they produced messages that were chanted in metrical form at stated religious festivals. For their services they received some recompense and a recognition by society of their value to it. In return they were required to work within the framework of established rules and practices. Since the prophetic office had evolved from that of the seer, it is not surprising to observe that on occasions they were not above using mimetic magic, as seen in Elijah's elaborate ceremony at Mount Carmel to produce rain, Jeremiah's yoke to place his own land under foreign domination, and Nahum's curse to hasten Nineveh's downfall. While recognizing that there was a conflict between priest and prophet, Dr. Williams maintains that it was not so much the result of a basic difference in point of view as it was caused by the prophets' despair at the failure of the priest to live up to the obligations of his high calling.

From primitive polytheism Hebraic religion evolved into the lofty monotheism of later Judaism, and ever in the forefront were the prophets. Magic became worship. Belief in a rather uninviting life hereafter in Sheol and concern only for the future communal welfare of Israel developed in time into a desire for personal rather than social immortality. Need for communication with God and for a morality based upon knowing what was required of men emerged into the hope for a Messiah who would reveal the divine will and lead men to salvation. Unfortunately, the law codes which in later years sought to embody the ideals of the prophets all too often were regarded as ceilings of life's conduct rather than as floors under one's endeavors. The inevitable consequence was a degeneration into legalistic religion. Nevertheless in spite of such setbacks religion steadily moved forward, with the prophets leading the way, challenging old concepts while presenting new ones, towering over their contemporaries as they dared question traditional beliefs. Dissimilar in personalities and backgrounds, arriving at their conclusions in different ways, they shaped the course of religious

thought because they had one thing in common—a complete consecration to God that was rooted in the very marrow of their existence.

Dr. Williams writes convincingly. There may be some who will question certain of his ideas and wonder at some of his omissions, but few will be unimpressed by his intellectual honesty, profound scholarship, and succinct expression of thought. It is quite difficult to say anything new on a subject as old as the prophets, but Dr. Williams does succeed in presenting his material with a freshness that should make it appealing to a wide variety of readers.

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**The Power Elite.** By C. WRIGHT MILLS. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956. 423 pp. \$6.00.

Sociological treatises becoming best sellers appear to be the order of the day. This is not surprising, since sociologists like David Riesman and C. Wright Mills have assumed the role of prophets and critics of society. Their realistic interpretations of the social scene throw into bold relief much of the hollowness and hypocrisy of modern culture.

Having discussed the middle classes in his previous best seller (*White Collar*, Oxford Press, 1951), Mills now analyzes the top levels of power and prestige in American society. The power elite consists of men who occupy the "command posts" and make the momentous decisions in the big corporation, in the machinery of the state, and in the military establishments. The top echelons of the political, economic, and military domains are the center of power, wealth, and celebrity. Power is maintained by a coalition and interchange of roles among the generals and admirals, the corporation executives, and the political leaders. Shifts in roles are facilitated by overlapping circles of interest, control, and friendship patterns.

The author is the provocative Professor of Sociology at Columbia University who is noted by students as the prof who commutes from Rockland County to Morningside Heights on a motorcycle. By his professional colleagues he is often thought of as a maverick who is impatient with tedious empirical researches which merely enumerate a plurality of causes. Mills has great, but not uncritical, admiration for Thorstein Veblen.

The idea of a power elite stands in the tradition of a long line of "elite theorists" who divide society into two strata, the select few and the ignorant masses, the possessors and the dispossessed, the manipulators and the manipulated, the knowers and the non-knowers. After locating the power personalities in three institutional spheres, Mills launches into an analysis of the upper classes in the local community, the high society of metropolitan areas, the celebrities of the mass media, and finally the real men of wealth and status whom he labels "corporate commissars," "higher warlords," and the "political directorate."

The author paints a picture of frightful uniformities in the style of life of the power elite. Their clothing is fitted by Brooks Brothers; their children are educated at selected prep schools like Choate, Andover, or Lawrenceville; higher education is secured at Ivy League schools like Princeton, Harvard, or Yale; they "belong" to certain metropolitan clubs and exclusive resorts. Episcopalian or Presbyterian church affiliation is a recurring theme employed by the author to depict the church membership, if any, of the group.

Righteous indignation is expressed most forcefully when the author exposes the scheming of the top groups to further their own interests. These include the power plays and "politic-ing" of the chief executives as well as the free wheeling and semi-legal financial practices and privileges of the corporate rich. The author's concluding chapter is entitled "The Higher Immorality" and indicts the power elite in such terms as "mindless mediocrity" and "organized irresponsibility." "Those who sit in the seats of the high and the mighty are selected and formed by the means of power, the sources of wealth, the mechanics of celebrity, which prevail in their society" (p. 361). The new idols are money and success!

It remains to inquire whether or not the denunciation of the critical sociologist is true or false prophecy. There is much that rings true in Mills' attack. His portrait of the "mass society" in which inert citizens are victims of manipulation via the mass media is particularly brilliant. But his polemics lead him to overstate the case. He fails to see the positive contributions from men of power, and denies that power tends to generate forces which counter power. The author seems to confuse tolerable inefficiency with "organized irresponsibility." The book should be read alongside two other volumes. The first is Howard R. Bowen's *Social Responsibility of the Businessman*. Only a cynic would interpret the scene of giant corporations and business leaders reflecting upon their social role as merely a public relations front. The second book is Lewis J. Sherrill's *The Gift of Power*. Herein lies a dimension of power which Mills completely misses. It is rather strange that in both *White Collar* and *The Power Elite* the author excludes the clergy from his stinging analysis. Is it too much to presume from this omission that Mills regards the clergy both as exempt from participation in the middle classes and from the exercise and control of power?

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**Elias Hicks, Quaker Liberal.** By BLISS FORBUSH. New York: Columbia University Press, 1956. xxii-355 pp. \$5.50.

Elias Hicks (1748-1830) is an important figure in the history of the Society of Friends not only because he was the greatest and most popular Quaker preacher of his time, but also because he was held responsible by the so-called Orthodox wing of the Society for the "Orthodox-Hicksite" separation in 1827. Now that that unfortunate breach has been healed and the responsibility for it placed on both sides by historians, a new biography of Hicks makes a timely appearance.

Bliss Forbush has produced a work which is excellent by the standards of scholarship. It is also highly readable not only for the student of Quaker history and of the religious history of America but also to readers who seek inspiration from the experience of a great man. *The Life and Labors of Elias Hicks*, by Henry Wilbur, was published in 1910. Since then new material about Hicks, including hundreds of letters, has come to light. The manuscript of Hicks's own *Journal* or autobiography contains about 100 pages not found in the various published editions. This *Journal*, begun in his old age, shows none of the fiery eloquence which drew great crowds to hear him.

A striking character emerges from these pages. In spite of the constant demands of his farm and large family, this Long Island Quaker was wholly responsive

to the frequent inward calls of the Spirit to travel far and wide in religious service. These journeys required considerable personal sacrifice. Like all Quakers of his time and earlier, Hicks was intensely opposed to professionalism in religion. About sixty-four such journeys are mentioned, covering about 40,000 miles, mostly on horseback. Walt Whitman, whose mysticism is indebted to that of Hicks, says that he possessed "an inner, apparently inexhaustible fund of volcanic passion, a tenderness blended with remorseless firmness as of a surgeon operating on a beloved patient." Bliss Forbush calls Hicks a "Quaker liberal," though no one advocated more earnestly keeping close to all the conservative traditions of Quaker "dress, speech and behavior."

That he was a liberal in his somewhat confused theology is true. But it is a debatable question whether this "liberalism" was not itself conservative, in the sense that Hicks was in some respects closer to the Quakerism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than to the more evangelical type of Quakerism which was spreading to the urban Quaker communities, largely under the influence of the Methodist revival, in the early years of the nineteenth. His central, almost his sole message was an appeal for complete obedience to the Inward Light. This had been the central message of Quakerism from the beginning. It placed the primary emphasis on the Inward Christ known by experience, rather than on the Christ of history known through a book, though the overwhelming significance of the latter was not to be overlooked. Hicks's opponents attacked him as minimizing the importance of the Scriptures and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The opponents of early Quakerism had constantly made the same charge, but the early Quakers denied it while Hicks did not.

That Hicks went too far in reducing religion to pure inwardness, while the Orthodox went too far in their emphasis on the outward, seems clear from the present book. But much that Hicks said sounds orthodox today. At the time of the separation the Hicksites claimed that the issue was not theology, as the Orthodox said, but freedom. As such the separation was a rebellion of the rank and file against the authority of the elders. One cause not mentioned by other historians was the annoyance of the wealthy Quakers because of the strong language used by Hicks in denouncing them for using the products of slave labor. Hicks was not characterized by the sensitive gentleness of John Woolman.

Bliss Forbush presents his hero at his best. This is justified, even at the loss of some objectivity, for Elias Hicks was much maligned by his opponents. In this book he lives again as a genuine "Quaker of the olden time" exhibiting, as one contemporary writes, "an example of the blessed effects of obedience to the pure principle."

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**New Concepts of Healing.** By A. GRAHAM IKIN. Introduction by Wayne E. Oates. New York: Association Press, 1956. xxiii-262 pp. \$3.50.

The author of this book is an Englishwoman, well trained in the field of psychology, and one who writes from within the Anglican communion. Her concern in this volume is to examine the relationships between certain psychological and religious approaches to healing.

In the first chapter, "The New Testament and Healing," the concept of

healing as a process making for wholeness emerges. She insists that there is a difference between the wholeness or healing which is achieved by getting at the root of the trouble, and that which is the elimination of symptoms through suggestion or some other process. She presents the case for a better training of clergymen in the psychological disciplines and the need for a higher level of cooperation between the clergy and the psychotherapists. She is very clear that the agent in spiritual healing (that healing which occurs in an unique encounter with God at the central core of personality) must be prepared to accept responsibility in the same way as the doctor.

She sees clearly that it is possible to use the sacraments and other religious approaches as a means to *develop* neuroses or other sickness, and that therefore the pastor needs to know what he is doing. Confession may be made a superficial, even damaging experience, when a deep understanding of inner motives is needed, and absolution may be given too frequently and too easily. She pleads for a greater interest on the part of medicine and the churches in spiritual healing. She examines the work of spiritual healers such as Agnes Sanford, Elsie Salmon, and Dr. Rebecca Beard. Opinions from such men as Alexis Carrel, Sir James Jeans, Du Nouy, Weatherhead and others are quoted. She finds support for the possibilities of faith healing in the German theologian, Karl Heim, and sees in the new physics confirmation of spiritual processes within man. She attempts a theology of suffering, and finds its significance to lie in the idea that in suffering we may each participate in the experience of mankind voluntarily and redemptively, either as a sufferer or as a healer.

The temper of this book is one of tolerant, open-minded inquiry undergirded by a positive faith that is seeking answers to certain questions of healing. Her approach is very eclectic. Thus one finds the views of both Freud and Jung, but a tendency toward favoring Jung's concept of the racial unconscious rather than Freud's more deterministic concept. Again one finds an insistence on accepting the modern psychotherapeutic interpretation of disorders, coupled with a kind of naïve mysticism which accepts certain healing experiences and symbols as real without critical inquiry. The writings and work of certain modern healers need far more critical examination than they are subjected to in this book. On the other hand, the ignorance and disinterest of large sections of the clergy and the medical profession are subjected to criticism, much of which is valid. The pitfalls of the clergy in handling such matters as confession, and the possibilities of a greater effectiveness on the part of adequately trained clergymen, are rightly stressed. And the implications of such diverse fields as the new physics and extrasensory perception are used to support a concept of life that would make faith healing possible.

It is to be regretted that so much stress is placed on the idea that the author is dealing with "new" concepts. There is nothing new here, except the author's particular way of discussing and relating concepts which have been part and parcel of American clinical pastoral training for the past twenty-five years. However, the insights and courage with which she deals with the material and problems makes this a book to be commended to the pastor or to the layman.

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**The Life of Matthew Simpson.** By ROBERT D. CLARK. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956. xi-346 pp. \$5.50.

The recent publication of this excellent life of Matthew Simpson highlights the fact that we have greatly needed a new appraisal of this giant figure in nineteenth-century Methodism. The only other full-length biography of Bishop Simpson, by George R. Crooks of Drew Theological Seminary, was published in 1890. During these intervening years many changes have taken place in the field of historical and biographical studies and these greatly affect our judgments of men and events. This more recent biographer has taken full advantage of these deeper sociological and psychological insights. He therefore is able to give us a fuller and truer portrait of the Bishop. Using the more modern methods but without striving for literary effect, Professor Clark gives us an intensely readable biography of this most dynamic Methodist minister, college president, church editor, bishop, but above all princely preacher and orator extraordinary.

First of all we are shown the contrast between the limited formal training and the amazing intellectual grasp and discipline of this man. Simpson spent only two very short periods in grade school; a period of less than a year in high school was followed by a term of two months in college. Yet this youth gained a reading knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, German, and Spanish, and was widely read in many fields of learning, especially the sciences. The secret of all this is found in his avid desire to learn. His hunger for learning was manifested early when under the tutelage of his older sisters he learned to read at the age of three. This quest for knowledge was pursued through all the years. Like John Wesley, whom he ardently admired, Simpson mapped out elaborate courses of study for himself and followed them with rigid discipline. In spite of his own lack of formal training he urged upon the Church the necessity of a trained ministry, and was one of the earliest supporters of theological schools.

Even more striking is his attainment of an almost hypnotic power of speech. We see him first as a youth so painfully shy that he could scarcely appear in public. When he did attempt to speak, his friends said, "His lips move but he does not speak." Years later we hear of him as "the prince of pulpit orators." He is seen as the master of all sorts and conditions of audiences, camp meetings, church conferences, college convocations, political rallies, and patriotic occasions. The stories of his capacity to move people would seem legendary if not well authenticated. Except for an occasional suggestion from a Pittsburgh layman, Simpson appears to have been unaided in his mastery of the art of speech.

Again we are shown the dramatic way in which Simpson came into the Methodist ministry. He has settled down to be a physician in his home town, after three years of careful study which led to his admission to the practice of medicine at the age of twenty-two. Then he yields to a combination of influences which he regards as providential, and enters the ministry. He therefore ceases to be a physician to the bodies of men and begins "a cure of souls." In April, 1834, he bids good-bye to family and friends and rides forth on a circuit of thirty-four churches. He has started on the trail of a traveling elder and is to follow that trail for exactly half a century.

We find that such a dynamic life follows no set pattern and cannot be kept within the conventional channels. As president of a struggling college in Indiana when only twenty-eight years old, he finds it necessary to enter the political arena. This he

does to gain for his denomination and his college what he regards as their proper "place in the sun." He leads in a successful movement to elect one of his own group as governor of the state. This foray into politics was undertaken for the sake of the church he deeply loved with what some would now call "an overweening pride." His startling leadership in this and other movements led to his election as the head of his delegation to the General Conference of 1844.

Once more we are able to see and feel the magnetic quality of Simpson, when at the age of forty-one he becomes a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His election was, as he said, "wholly providential." While he had taken no steps to secure his election, it is clear that some of his friends had set out to aid providence at this point in his career. Even though he gave himself with unremitting zeal to the details of episcopal administration, he did not overlook the larger issues confronting his church. He saw, as few others did, that the Methodist church must move out from its frontier status and take its place in the more sophisticated society of the later day, and must therefore adopt new ways and new measures. In a very large sense he became the voice of Methodism, and in a lesser sense of Protestantism as well.

It is evident that Lincoln sought his counsel and advice. Moreover he was asked often to pray with the President as well as for him. This biographer deflates somewhat the story of Simpson's influence on Lincoln especially with regard to the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. Some of us Methodists were brought up on the tradition that this Proclamation was issued by Lincoln largely because of the prayers and pleadings of Simpson. The facts as related here hardly warrant this assumption. If at this point the biographer robs us of one dramatic scene, he gives us so many more that we must forgive him.

Professor Clark provides a sympathetic analysis of the struggle through which Simpson and others like him went, on the question of slavery. We sense some of the agony they felt as, step by step, this controversy led to the separation of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the division of the Union. Inclined at first to the idea that the Church must be preserved at all cost, Simpson veered at the end more and more toward the abolition of slavery, as urged by his Uncle Matthew. By 1844 he was ready to vote for The Plan of Separation. Some of the things he said then and later during the days of war and reconstruction were regrettable, but must be read a hundred years later in the light of the heat and passion of the time. This biographer helps us to sympathetic understanding. Likewise he discusses Simpson's use of political and even military power to place Northern ministers where their Southern brothers had been, in a way that enables us to judge him considerably even though we cannot approve.

Clark concludes with a significant quotation written about Simpson at the time of his death: "Even the eagle grows weary and must rest." You cannot think of him in pedestrian terms; neither can you apply the figure of a man on horseback. Only the picture of one mounting up on wings as an eagle, taking off on long, lofty flights, is quite adequate. Let this reviewer in closing record his gratitude as a Methodist minister to the author, a Congregational layman, for this revised and realistic portrait of a truly great Bishop.

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**The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology.** By OSCAR CULLMANN, trans. by A. J. B. Higgins. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956. xii-217 pp. \$4.50.

Oscar Cullmann, Professor at the University of Basel and the Sorbonne, author of the important books *Christ and Time* and *Peter*, discusses in this volume of ten collected essays subjects which are of the utmost importance both for the understanding of the New Testament and the history of the early Church.

In his first essay, "The Necessity and Function of Higher Criticism," Cullmann makes a point of the necessity of both philological and historical exegesis, since the entire biblical revelation, both in the Old and the New Testament, is a revelation of God in history. He points out the difference between world history, which we call secular history, and biblical history—the history of the divine revelation. For the former, biblical history is but a collection of news items of local importance; from the point of view of salvation-history, however, it is the very norm which gives world history its direction. Theology in the New Testament is therefore not merely related to history but the very essence of history.

Cullmann considers all allegorical interpretations of history, whether classical or modern, fundamental theological errors. "Allegorical interpretation purports to uncover the 'eternal' meaning which lies behind the historical facts quite independently of these historical facts. For allegorical exegesis history is merely a symbol, behind which it looks for something else." It is interesting that Bultmann's problem of Demythologizing does not arise for Cullmann; he sees biblical history as the history of salvation about which the New Testament speaks in the terms of *oikonomia*. He rejects the idea of salvation, history being a purely external shell which must be removed in order to reach the genuine message of the New Testament.

Summing up, Cullmann assigns a threefold task to higher criticism. In the first instance there should be a theological exposition of texts which in many cases will show a linking together of facts of the past, present, and future; secondly, philological and historical exegesis should point to the human and accidental setting in which biblical revelation has shown itself at a given moment in history; thirdly, this exegesis should control all ideas and suggestions which are inherent in the text and remove all those which do not bear examination.

The present reviewer was particularly interested in the study, "The Kingship of Christ and the Church in the New Testament," as it is particularly enlightening for Cullmann's conception of salvation-history. Salvation-history begins with the Creation and ends with the new Creation on the last day; between these two dates falls the decisive event of the Cross. Cullmann introduces into this study the concept of the *Regnum Christi*, which he distinguishes from the Kingdom of God. The history of salvation develops according to the Divine Plan by clearly defined periods. The *Regnum Christi* has a beginning—Christ's death and resurrection; and it has no end, but the end lies in the future. Consequently it cannot carry a concrete historical date like the beginning. But the New Testament indicates that the second coming of Christ constitutes the final phase of the *Regnum Christi*. Cullmann emphasizes that the "temporal line" is characteristic of the Christian revelation. He points out repeatedly that the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, teaches "that the unfolding of time itself is determined by the history of God in time," that eschatology is a "chronological concept," not an "existential decision" (Bultmann). "It can never

be stated too clearly . . . that in the New Testament time is not a reality hostile to God, but the means of grace by which God intends man's salvation."

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**Adventurous Preaching.** By JAMES H. ROBINSON. Great Neck, N. Y.: Channel Press, 1956. 186 pp. \$2.50.

**Preaching and the New Reformation.** By TRUMAN B. DOUGLASS. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956. xiii-142 pp. \$2.50.

Preaching is an activity both earnestly practiced and eagerly discussed. Each publishing season brings its quota of books on the subject, and certain distinguished lectureships make certain that the supply will never fail. Methods have been so thoroughly canvassed that it might appear that little new remains to be said, and a survey of recent Lyman Beecher lectures suggests that a significant shift in emphasis is taking place. Attention has been diverted from the construction and delivery of sermons to the basic content and fundamental presuppositions of preaching.

Of this trend the two volumes under review provide excellent examples. Neither Dr. Robinson nor Dr. Douglass is primarily concerned with the skills of the preacher. Both are deeply interested in his approach to his task and in his outlook on the world in which he performs it.

Dr. Robinson is director of the Morningside Community Center and minister of the Church of the Master in Harlem, New York City, both of which he founded. He places the minister and his message in a context as wide as the troubled world in which we are called to live and serve. Even a reader unfamiliar with the author's distinguished record would soon realize that he is in contact with a mind which has touched life at many points. Dr. Robinson's acumen, sharpened by his experience, enables him to probe the current situation with great discernment. But this is no mere essay in analysis. It is the great merit of these lectures that they continually match our plight with resources great enough to meet it. If we were less persuaded of our need, we might be tempted to ignore the full scope of our message; if, on the other hand, we lacked the message, our need would merely deepen our despair. Side by side we are shown the gravity of man's predicament and the redeeming power of God's grace.

At every point the book bears evidence of direct contact with the great problems of our day. Dr. Robinson has fought with evil in the arena of life; he has faced it many times and in many forms. He has clearly earned the right to speak, but he creates the impression that he is not equally familiar with all the areas which he considers. Though the book never lacks vigor and eloquence, the author seems more fully the master of his material in some chapters than in others.

To read this work is a moving and a rewarding experience. The great truths of the gospel emerge as the only answer to the problems of a world stumbling toward disaster. The book has so much to offer that it is unfortunate that a little more care did not go to its preparation. It bears too clearly the marks of haste, and many of these might have been removed if the publisher's readers had performed their task with greater thoroughness. Subject does not always agree with object; metaphors become strangely mixed, and prepositions are not always used with strict consistency. A book which might well be read more than once and which could profitably be consulted repeatedly would have benefited from an index. And it is necessary to protest against a system of references which gives all the information about a quotation

except the fact most necessary for its verification—i.e., the page on which it occurs. The final word, however, must be of deep gratitude for an earnest, eloquent, and often searching exposition of the preacher's task.

In *Preaching and the New Reformation*, Dr. Douglass of the National Council of Churches takes as his subject the emergence of the world church, and its bearing on the preaching of the Word. Merely as a study of the ecumenical movement, the work has great and solid merit. Even those who have participated in many of the gatherings which Dr. Douglass discusses will find new insights on every page. His command of the documentary resources is thorough and exact, and he marshals his material with admirable clarity. But this is not simply another book on a well-worn theme. Nor is it eminent in a growing body of ecumenical literature merely by virtue of its wisdom and its eloquence; at every point Dr. Douglass relates the ecumenical movement to the concerns of the local church and to the task of the working minister. He interprets preaching in a high as well as a comprehensive sense, and any preacher must be a poor herald of the Word if he does not close the book with a worthier sense of his own mission and a deepened reverence for the community of faith. The vast new resources of biblical and theological understanding made available through the ecumenical movement are considered in the light of the problem of communicating these new insights to our age. And all this is done in a style at once flexible and distinguished.

It may seem at times that Dr. Douglass presses unduly his contention that there are values in the ecumenical movement which can be preached. When the attempt is so seldom made, he may be pardoned for insisting that it can be done; but I question if it can be done on the scale or indeed in quite the way that his book suggests. The ecumenical movement should create a new atmosphere in the pulpit; it should provide new perspectives on the mission of the world church and diversify preaching with an immense amount of illustrative material, but I doubt if it forms the raw material for sermons in quite the way Dr. Douglass seems to imply. He protests too much; he can readily be pardoned, since so few have hitherto bothered to protest at all. A very minor but curious point is the ecumenical arithmetic which Dr. Douglass seems to employ. The Oxford and Edinburgh conferences (1937) were thirty years previous to Evanston (1954) (p. x); while twenty years of ecumenical effort separated the reports of Edinburgh (1937) and Amsterdam (1948) (p. 117). The book is well printed, is fully documented and carefully indexed.

Both these works can be warmly commended to all who either preach sermons or listen to them. Their virtues are very great and the defects are relatively small. Here are set forth the great issues now facing the church, and with eloquence and insight we are challenged to a worthier service.

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**Religion, Morality, and Law.** Ed. by ARTHUR L. HARDING. Studies in Jurisprudence III. Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1956. x-109 pp. \$3.00.

In these days when the various faculties of a university are apt to practice a dangerous isolationism, we may be grateful to the Southern Methodist School of Law and the Southwestern Legal Foundation for bringing together in con-

ference an able group of theologians and lawyers to discuss the relations of theology and jurisprudence. This volume is the third to be issued from these conferences.

The Editor, Dr. Harding, is Professor of Law at the Southern Methodist Law School and Chairman of Graduate Studies. The present volume consists of four papers on these themes: "Can there be morality without religion?" "Can there be law without morality?" "Christian morality and the criminal law," and "A theological analysis of natural law." The text of the book is Lord Justice Denning's aphorism: "Without religion there can be no morality; and without morality there can be no law."

Robert E. Fitch (Pacific School of Religion) deals with the first part of the text. He maintains that "the only consistent secular moralities are those of pleasure and of power." We may perhaps question whether these are strictly "moralities" at all for morality is concerned with duty, not desire. It may be thought that Dr. Fitch brushes aside too easily the issues raised by Communism, and almost wholly neglects classical (that is, atheist) Buddhism. Many persons who profess no religion live exemplary lives. But it may fairly be maintained that theism is logically involved in the mysterious word "ought." As Dr. Fitch puts it, "morality needs an objective point of reference that is stable and secure."

Dr. Harding himself discusses in modern terms the old question whether a reference to justice must enter into the definition of a law. He urges that law should be considered in terms of the functions which it performs. Morality is essentially related to law because, in his curious phrase, "law is people." He finds "the essential tragedy of the law" in this, that while law is indispensable for reformation or repentance, it is not merely powerless to produce reformation but may often hinder it. The Christian view of law, he maintains, rests upon the principle that individuals can only find the security needed for moral and spiritual development where social disintegration is checked by force.

A professor of law, Wilber G. Katz (University of Chicago), offers an admirable paper on the criminal law as it appears to a Christian aware of the insights afforded by modern psychological studies.

The reader who approaches the question of Natural Law from the side of Jurisprudence may find the final chapter by Joseph D. Quillian (Professor of Homiletics, S.M.U.) rather puzzling. It is not altogether clear what he understands by Natural Law. He quotes a curious passage from Karl Barth in which that great theologian appears to speak of Natural Law as a "human ideal." For some obscure and not historical reason, Dr. Quillian holds that "the Ultimate Being of philosophical Natural Law tends to be pantheistic." He holds that the conception of Natural Law which comes to us from classical antiquity needs to be "converted." He discusses the question of man's responsibility on the one side and the sovereignty of God on the other. His paper may be considered as a contribution rather to the difficulties of the Barthian theology than to the question of Natural Law in its relation to jurisprudence.

It is to be hoped we may have further studies from this very able group.

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## Book Notices

The United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (150 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York) has put out six attractive monographs on the history of the following colleges: Fukien Christian University, Ginling College, St. John's University, Hangchow University, Shantung Christian University, Soochow University. Histories of the other great Chinese Christian colleges are yet to come. Each is a labor of love written by an author or authors who knew the institution intimately from within. Each carries a foreword by Eric North, pointing out that the life of these colleges covered "a significant span of Chinese national history." "Because there is now an interruption in their service—which we pray God may only be temporary—it has seemed the part of wisdom to record the history of each of these institutions that the fruits of their experience may be garnered . . . discerning minds serving other institutions in other lands may find here . . . guidance and strength." Each is priced at \$3.00 (cloth) or \$2.00 (paper).

*To Whom Shall We Go?* by D. M. Baillie (Scribner, \$3.00, with memoir by John Dow of Toronto) is a posthumous collection of sermons by the author of the now classical *God Was in Christ*. From a large number of sermons, these have been selected by a few friends in response to many requests; most were preached at St. Andrew's University Chapel, some were B.B.C. broadcasts. This is preaching as simple and direct as it is profound.

Volume IV of the Library of Christian Classics covers *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa*. (Edited by William Telfer, Westminster, \$5.00.) These are the most influential writings of two Eastern churchmen in the latter part of the fourth century A.D. Cyril's *Catechetical Lectures* are important as showing the caliber of final instruction given to initiates just before their baptism and admission to church membership. Westminster has also sent us a beautiful Revised Edition of the *Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible*, the work of George Ernest Wright, Floyd Filson, and W. F. Albright, bringing all the material up to date (\$7.50).

*Selected Letters of John Wesley*, edited by Frederick C. Gill (Philosophical Library, \$4.75), aims at "a cross-section of the correspondence, keeping as far as possible to what is personal and vital, yet preserving a fair representation and balance of the whole." Valuable to any who would like a lively picture of the man, but has not time to cope with the full eight volumes of *Letters*.

Robert Tobias, who traveled extensively in East Europe for seven years as a staff member of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, and conferred with churchmen and government authorities on relief and interchurch aid, has written a large, thoroughly documented volume, *Communist Christian Encounter in East Europe* (\$8.00). This is published by the School of Religion Press, Butler University, Indianapolis, where he is now on the faculty. His study covers the "satellite borderland" from 1917 to 1951. "Communist purposes are accurately analyzed, their application to specific situations described and their relation to the general Communist pattern defined . . ." The churches' "heroic and increasingly victorious struggle began in a process of resistance, proceeded through a series of accommodations to the point where the church was renewed and reformed and launched its own spiritual offensive" . . . "a massive challenge for the church universal" (comment by Harold Fey).

We have two books from the Psycho-Medical Library (134 Nassau Street, New York 38): (1) *John and Jesus in Their Day and Ours* (\$5.00), by J. Leonard Farmer, Ph.D., D.D., now at Huston-Tillotson College. His studies and teaching have combined the fields of philosophy, religion, and the social sciences. The John of the title is John the Baptist, and the author's aim is to show the meaning of the Gospels in relation to social life and public policies, past and present. His study is provocative and useful especially to ministers who wish to relate their preaching to contemporary problems. (2) *The Psycho-Medical Guide* (\$5.00), by Curt S. Wachtel, M.D., is a popularly written casebook designed to help patients, and others, to understand the principles and procedures of psychosomatic medicine and guidance. Dr. Wachtel in his work frankly recognizes "the soul" as equally real with the body.

Another New Testament work we must belatedly mention is the little book, *The Origin of the Gospel of Mark*, by Harold A. Guy (Harper, \$2.50). A British scholar, Dr. Guy worked through a personal study of Mark's Gospel and came out with quite different conclusions than he anticipated. He retraces this ground for his readers. Dr. Morton S. Enslin calls it "an amazing little book, very provocative and stimulating," and says, "It grapples with a very real problem—the gap between the 'oral material' . . . and the 'finished gospel.'"

David Wesley Soper has written an *Epistle to the Skeptics* (Association Press, \$2.50), which he describes as "A personal letter, an attempt at honest, simple, 'direct communication.'" "Each chapter begins with a section of my own experience as a pilgrim—struggling with the two demands of skepticism and faith (of honest questioning and necessary action)." The chapters are: "Why Skepticism Is a Necessity," "Pre-Skeptical Religion," "Pre-Skeptical Irreligion," "Faith: at War With Skepticism," "Skepticism: the Ally of Faith."

*The Mighty Beginnings*, edited by Garland Evans Hopkins, is a collection of sermons on the Book of Genesis—which as he says "abounds in texts and subjects people want to hear discussed." It is put out by Bethany Press (\$3.00), and contains seventeen sermons by preachers associated with *The Pulpit* during Dr. Hopkins' editorship. They range from Unitarian to Missouri Synod Lutheran.

Dr. Samuel G. Craig, former editor of *Christianity Today* and *The Presbyterian*, has written *Jesus of Yesterday and Today* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, \$2.75). Written from an intelligent conservative-evangelical standpoint, the book presents Jesus as human and divine, appealing to the lay reader: "the Jesus who will help him in this life and in the life to come."

*Impressive Inquiries*, by the late John Parks Lafferty, comes to us from Exposition Press (\$3.00). This is a study of questions by, to, and about Christ, in the Gospels and the Acts. "When compiled and classified," says the author, "they form a catechism that challenges our study." A beloved Pennsylvania pastor and teacher, he found especial interest in the Master's teaching techniques. This same Press publishes *The Faith of Jesus*, by Ira J. Martin, 3rd, who teaches philosophy and religion at Berea College, Kentucky. This is subtitled "A Study for Inquiring Christians," and is in the nature of a textbook, based thoroughly on the Synoptic Gospels without Johannine or neo-orthodox accretions. "It is the conviction of this writer that we need to be bold and take Jesus as we find him, and not let human theology confuse the issue" (p. 200).

Seabury Press sends us "the Seabury book for Advent 1956," *Man in the Middle*, by James A. Pike and Howard A. Johnson. This consists of "Conversations of a Tempted Soul and Two Voices [representatives of God and Satan] on the Seven Deadly Sins." These were prepared for presentation as trialogues at Sunday Evensong in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and later were broadcast over the A.B.C. radio network. Popularly phrased and lacking pat solutions, they are meant to "promote within the soul further debate in which each individual will be led to seek his own answer to the great question."

Friendship Press sends us *Mission: U.S.A.*, by James W. Hoffman (cloth, \$2.50; paper, \$1.25) with Adult Guide. The author, a history teacher and religious journalist with varied experience, presents a realistic picture of changing America, urban and rural, and shows the techniques being used by the churches to meet the nation's spiritual illness. "In our mission to the American people, we do not ask men to become Christians so that our civilization can be saved; we want our civilization saved so that men will be free to become Christians."

The American Business Men's Research Foundation (431 South Dearborn Street, Chicago 5) sends us a booklet, *What's New About Alcohol and Us* (no price given). "This book may be used in many ways, as a textbook or as a reference book. Admittedly few subjects are so difficult to study without passion—for or against. . . . This book is our attempt at the objective gathering into one volume material on alcohol and man in the main fields of our daily lives." The research was done by staff members with varying viewpoints. No conclusions or exhortations are presented; the evidence offered is already damning enough.  
E. H. L.



